

Green Fire

By GLENN HUGHES



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GREEN FIRE

*A MELODRAMA OF 1990
IN THREE ACTS*

By

GLENN HUGHES

(Based on a Novel of the Same Title by John Taine)

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"GREEN FIRE"

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CHARACTERS

JAMES FERGUSON, *Director of the Independent Laboratories.*

VERA, *his daughter.*

ALAN, *his son.*

THOMPSON }
WILLS } *Ferguson's assistants.*

SUSIE, *maidservant at the Fergusons'.*

DAVID MACROBERT, *a brilliant young physicist.*

DOCTOR BRAND, *of the Department of Public Health.*

BORIS JEVIC, *a titanic figure, at the head of the Consolidated Power Corporation.*

JUNE ADAMS, *secretary to Jevic.*

DOCTOR WERNER, *an old scientist in Jevic's employ.*

CHUNG, *Jevic's personal servant.*

SCENE SYNOPSIS

ACT I. SCENE I. *Ferguson's laboratory. 2:30 a.m.*

SCENE II. *The same. 8:15 a.m.*

ACT II. SCENE I. *Jevic's laboratory. 2 p.m.*

SCENE II. *Ferguson's laboratory. 4 p.m.*

ACT III. *Jevic's laboratory. 11:35 p.m.*

*The entire action occurs in the course of one day
in the late summer of the year 1990.*

"Green Fire" was first produced at the Pasadena Community Playhouse on May 28, 1931, under the direction of Gilmour Brown. Subsequently it was produced by the Claremont Community Players and the Seattle Repertory Playhouse.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

JAMES FERGUSON: *Is a kindly, idealistic scientist of fifty-three. He is a quiet, persistent worker. Rather tired.*

VERA: *Is an energetic, high-spirited girl of twenty-two. Well educated and possessed of a sense of humor. Efficient.*

ALAN: *Is a good-looking lad of twenty. Easy going and enthusiastic. Not brilliant.*

THOMPSON and WILLS: *Are men in their forties. Competent laboratory workers. Devoted to FERGUSON and entirely professional in their interests. Dependable.*

SUSIE: *Is an ordinary domestic. Quiet and capable.*

DAVID MACROBERT: *Is a young Scotchman. About thirty-five. Should be tall and red-haired, though not necessarily. Slow of speech. Twinkle in his eye. Proud.*

DOCTOR BRAND: *Is a neat, rather nervous medical man of forty-one. He is quick and sharp in speech, and bright-eyed. Very likeable.*

BORIS JEVIC: *Is a large, mysterious man—a Serbian, with a touch of the Oriental about him. Theatrical in appearance and speech. Vain. Dynamic. Age seventy-nine.*

JUNE ADAMS: *Is a pretty girl of about twenty. Neat. Sympathetic. Preferably blonde. Soft voice.*

DOCTOR WERNER: *Is a rather emaciated man of sixty. Sallow. Apologetic.*

CHUNG: *Is a Chinese of perhaps thirty. Quiet, with knowing eyes.*

GREEN FIRE

ACT ONE

SCENE I

FERGUSON'S *private laboratory. It is half workshop and half living-room. It is very severe and unadorned—all surfaces undecorated and spotless. Glass, concrete, aluminum and steel, with some leather in the upholstering. No other textures. The artificial light comes from unseen sources and is diffused against the surfaces. The room is high and the walls thick. The back wall is set at two-thirds the playing depth of the stage, to allow the main portion of the other setting required for the play to be left standing throughout. In the back wall, Right of Center, is a large arch behind which is seen an alcove in the shape of a dome. Most of this dome is of glass. At Right of the alcove, set at right angles to the foot-lights, is a large work-desk covered with electrical and astronomical instruments. In front of the desk is a straight-backed chair. The back wall is broken again by a jog just Left of Center, which is the beginning of a rectangular alcove, shallower than the curved one previously described. Electrical equipment stands in the corners of the rectangular alcove, and in its Cen-*

ter is a door L.C. leading to the living apartment of the Fergusons. Against back wall of the alcove is a series of shelves filled with scientific books. The entire Left wall (the end of the room) is composed of a high window. Parallel with the window (i.e., in an oblique position), and well down stage, about six feet away from the window, is a straight leather couch with a single pillow. On a level with the couch, but only slightly Left of Center, is a long, low rectangular table made of metal and glass. Six metal chairs with leather upholstery surround the table. At Upper Right is a semi-circular bench with a small table in its Center. On this table are magazines and a telephone. Back of this furniture, in the corner of the room, are metal cabinets, and on them, more electrical equipment. These cabinets extend also down the Right wall almost to the door, which is two-thirds of the way along the wall. This door leads to the street. The illustrations will show different treatments of the settings.

The LIGHTING is quite bright around the table and couch. Softer at stage Right and in the alcoves.

As the Curtain rises WILLS and THOMPSON are standing at either side of the couch, looking down anxiously at FERGUSON, who is lying motionless and pale. VERA is pacing the floor nervously. All THREE MEN are in laboratory garb.

VERA. Why don't they come? Why don't they come?

WILLS. (Calmly) Give them time, Miss Ferguson. Alan's been gone only nine minutes.

THOMPSON. It's a twenty-minute trip at the very least.



ACT I. SETTING BY PASADENA COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE.

See page 7

VERA. I should have gone after Doctor Brand myself. Alan's so cautious! He won't drive over two hundred, even at night, with the speedway tunnels practically empty. You'd think he was living back in nineteen-forty.

WILLS. It's too bad Doctor Brand refuses to leave his radiophone connection on all night. Otherwise, we'd have been saved at least ten minutes.

THOMPSON. Sh! (*Indicates FERGUSON, who stirs slightly.*)

VERA. What is it? (*She hurries to FERGUSON's side.*)

THOMPSON. He's coming 'round. He moved slightly.

WILLS. The blood is coming back into his cheeks.

THOMPSON. Yes, slowly.

VERA. (*Dropping to her knees*) Father! Do you hear me? It's Vera.

WILLS. I wouldn't hurry him, Miss Ferguson. He's coming 'round.

VERA. (*Rising to her feet*) If we only knew what it was that caused this! Do you think Doctor Brand will be able to tell?

THOMPSON. If anybody can tell, Doctor Brand can.

VERA. It's not his heart, is it? It couldn't be anything as simple as that.

WILLS. As simple as that?

VERA. I mean—it couldn't have been just strain from overwork, could it?

THOMPSON. It could have been, but I don't think it was. Your father is a terrific worker, but his heart is absolutely sound. Doctor Brand himself mentioned the fact just the other day. Besides, from what you told us of how he looked when you first noticed something wrong, and from your own sensations when you touched him——

VERA. (*Shuddering and turning away*) Oh, it was

awful. I felt as though I—— How can I describe it?

WILLS. Don't try to, now. Wait until Alan and the Doctor come. Hello! He moved again! (*Picks up one of FERGUSON's hands and chafes it.*)

THOMPSON. A good idea! (*Takes FERGUSON's other hand and does likewise*) His hands are warming up. (*Feels the unconscious man's forehead*) So is his forehead.

VERA. Oh, I'm so glad!

WILLS. (*Softly*) How about it, Chief? (*Leans over FERGUSON as he speaks*) Do you hear me? (*FERGUSON turns perceptibly and murmurs something unintelligible.*)

VERA. He's speaking! What is it, Father? (*Leans close to him.*)

THOMPSON. That's splendid. We'll have him on his feet in a minute.

FERGUSON. (*Murmuring intelligibly*) Alpha naught-nine-three-two-five—intensity Q seven-seventeen——

WILLS. (*Softly*) Never mind about that now, Chief. You're all through work for tonight. Time to take a rest.

FERGUSON. (*Still murmuring*) But it couldn't be that nebula, because——

VERA. Father! Wake up! You're dreaming. Don't you see where you are?

FERGUSON. (*Becoming conscious and opening his eyes cautiously*) Vera? What are you doing here this time of night? You promised me you'd go to bed.

VERA. But, Father! It's you who should have gone to bed. You got yourself into a lot of trouble, and you've frightened us half to death.

THOMPSON. How do you feel now, Chief? Stronger?

FERGUSON. (*Looking up at THOMPSON*) Hello,

THOMPSON? You here too? What is this, anyway?

VERA. I called them in, Father, to help you. Lucky they were both working late in the big laboratory.

FERGUSON. (*Lifting himself on one elbow*) What's been going on here? What am I doing on this couch?

WILLS. You fainted, Chief.

FERGUSON. (*Incredulously*) Fainted? *I fainted?*

THOMPSON. Yes, sir. Vera came in to ask you to stop work and get some rest. She found you in a dead faint.

FERGUSON. (*Puzzled*) Hm! That's odd. Very odd. I don't faint. (*To VERA*) You're sure, my dear, that I wasn't just taking a nap?

VERA. (*Putting an arm about his shoulders*) Indeed, you were not just taking a nap. You were white as plaster, and cold all over.

FERGUSON. Cold, eh? Then are you sure I wasn't dead? (*He laughs gently.*)

VERA. Father!

WILLS. Nothing to worry about, sir, I'm sure.

FERGUSON. (*Rather snappishly*) How do you know it's not?

WILLS. Well, Chief, anyone's apt to faint from overwork and lack of sleep. You've been at that ray analyser night and day now for almost a week. You'll have to let up a bit.

THOMPSON. How do you feel now, Chief?

FERGUSON. (*Whose mind is now clear and whose energy is returning*) Fine as a fiddle. (*Stretching his arms*) Heigh-ho! That little rest did me good. Out of my way, everyone! I'm getting up.

VERA. Please, Father. Don't get up for a while.

FERGUSON. Why shouldn't I get up? I'm quite myself again. It's all nonsense. Fainted, indeed! Dozing—that's all it was. I nodded off for a min-

ute, and Vera bobbed in just in time to catch me at it. (*He stands up and stretches his legs.*)

WILLS. But Mr. Ferguson, you haven't heard everything. (*He looks questioningly at VERA and THOMPSON.*)

FERGUSON. (*Quickly*) Everything? What haven't I heard?

WILLS. Vera tells us there were unusual circumstances involved.

FERGUSON. Well, well, what the devil! Is this a mystery yarn? Talk plainly, Wills.

THOMPSON. Don't you think we had better wait until Alan comes with Doctor Brand? It will save repeating.

WILLS. I think we had better.

FERGUSON. Doctor Brand? You sent Alan to bring him here? To look after me? (*The MEN nod.*)

VERA. Of course we did, Father. It was serious.

FERGUSON. Poor Brand. Getting him out of bed at midnight to come a hundred miles to see me recovering from a nap.

THOMPSON. Midnight! It's nearly three o'clock, Chief.

FERGUSON. The devil! (*He glances at his wrist-watch*) You're right. Then no wonder I feel rested. I must have slept several hours. At any rate it's a rotten trick to play on a hard-working doctor who has half the troubles of the world on his shoulders.

VERA. Doctor Brand won't mind. He's a darling.

FERGUSON. No man's a darling when he's dragged out of bed on a wild-geese chase. (*He moves toward c.; staggers slightly; clutches the table for support*) Hello! What's this? A bit wobbly in the knees. (*THOMPSON and WILLS leap to his support, but he recovers and waves them away.*)

VERA. Father, you're not strong enough yet—

FERGUSON. Stay away from me. I'm quite all right. Leg's asleep from lying on it so long. A bit numb, that's all. (*Slaps his leg, and sits down by table.*)

THOMPSON. Time for the Doctor to be here, unless Alan overdoes his usual caution and drives, as Vera says, in the manner of nineteen-forty.

FERGUSON. Better get something warm for Brand to drink when he arrives. Chilly night. He won't be dressed properly either.

VERA. What shall I get, Father?

FERGUSON. Susie's asleep long ago, I suppose.

VERA. That's all right. I can get it. We can all have something. Tea, coffee, chocolate, hot milk, Bevra, Necto.

FERGUSON. Everyone can have what they want. I'll take beef bouillon. Double strength.

VERA. Blood pressure!

FERGUSON. Blood pressure be damned. I'm weak. I need nourishment. Give Doctor Brand some hot milk. We'll treat him like an invalid. Then after he's swallowed his milk we'll surprise him with a glass of that nineteen-thirty-eight whiskey that the government so kindly distilled to celebrate the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. (*Exit VERA L.C.*)

THOMPSON. (*Smacking his lips*) This is an occasion!

FERGUSON. Don't get excited, Thompson. You're not to have any of that whiskey. I've only one bottle left, and I'm saving it for the big day.

WILLS. You mean for the day when——

FERGUSON. (*Rises*) You know what day I mean. (*His eyes light up*) And it's not far away, either.

THOMPSON. Any good developments within the last twenty-four hours, Chief?

FERGUSON. Very important developments, Thompson. But there are still—(*Suddenly and sharply*)

—I want you and Wills to get me those tabulations in a hurry. How much more have you got to do on them?

WILLS. We were working on them tonight, Chief. About two days of fast going and we'll be through.

FERGUSON. Two days! I need them sooner. Speed up to the limit. It's a matter of— (*He pauses.*)

THOMPSON. A matter of—?

FERGUSON. Never mind. You'll find out soon enough the implications of this work. I don't want to frighten you. But you must work hard and fast. It's our energy, our speed and accuracy, against—*disaster!*

WILLS. Disaster! You mean—

FERGUSON. I'll say no more than that. Disaster is the only word. And it's a weak word, I can tell you, compared with the fact. (*Goes close to the Two MEN and clutches their arms*) We've got to stand together. It's for the sake of the world! The three of us stand here together—puny men—face to face with destiny. Three of us—no more. It's—it's almost staggering. (*He stands silently for a moment; then moves away.*)

THOMPSON. What about MacRobert? Isn't he coming in with us?

FERGUSON. (*Clenching his hands*) MacRobert! That pig-headed devil! He'll not come in with any one! He's proud; he's perverse; he's young; he's a Scotchman! So am I a Scot, for that matter, but MacRobert is ten times the Scot that I am. He's terrible! And what a genius! With him beside us here in the laboratory we'd double our rate of progress. With him we'd beat Jevic to a standstill. Without him—we'll have to wait and see.

WILLS. But he's very fond of Vera. I thought she'd win him over to us before now.

FERGUSON. (*Crying out*) Of course he's fond of

Vera. That's part of the trouble! It makes him shyer than a bat in daylight. He won't come near the lab for fear he'll be accused of courting her. And with the world hanging in a balance!—Oh, it's damnable!

THOMPSON. Any news from Jevic's camp?

FERGUSON. (*Sharply*) Too much.

WILLS. What do you mean, Chief?

FERGUSON. He's got something. (*A worried look comes over his face*) He's close to the ultimate secret. Too close.

THOMPSON. You've seen him? Talked with him?

FERGUSON. (*Mysteriously*) I have not seen him. I have not talked with him. (*With a curious smile*) But I had a message from him tonight.

WILLS. You did?

FERGUSON. (*Very slowly*) I did. A message from Mr. Boris Jevic, who would be master of the world.

THOMPSON. Who brought the message?

FERGUSON. No one. It came by a most round-about course. (*Softly*) From a very distant star. (*WILLS and THOMPSON look at each other in amazement.*)

WILLS. But, Chief, you can't mean—— (*An electric BUZZER sounds three times.*)

FERGUSON. (*Waving aside the question*) There's Alan at last with poor Brand. (*He moves toward door R. WILLS and THOMPSON confer hastily in whispers.*)

FERGUSON. (*Muttering*) I hope Vera has got the hot milk ready for him. (*He opens door R.*)

WILLS. (*In an audible whisper*) His mind isn't back to normal yet.

THOMPSON. Perhaps not. Though it seems very lucid. I wonder——

WILLS. Sh! (*DOCTOR BRAND enters R. and is followed by ALAN. BRAND has on a heavy top-coat*

over his pyjamas and dressing-gown. He is wearing bedroom slippers.)

FERGUSON. Hello, Brand. We were expecting you.

BRAND. *(Astonished at finding himself greeted by his patient)* Good heavens, Ferguson! What are you doing up? Alan told me you were laid out cold?

ALAN. But he was! Father! However did you make such a quick recovery?

FERGUSON. It was just a trick of mine to get a little rest. I'm quite all right. Sit down, and we'll have something warm. *(He closes the door. ALAN and BRAND remove their coats, throwing them on the bench at Upper R.)*

BRAND. Well, this is most amazing.

FERGUSON. Scurvy trick to play on you, Brand. I didn't know they'd go into hysterics and drag you out of bed. *(Goes back to table.)*

BRAND. *(Coming down c.)* Don't worry about that. Hello, Wills. Hello, Thompson. I say, does this laboratory run all night?

THOMPSON. Very nearly. We're rather pressed with work just now.

ALAN. Where's Vera?

FERGUSON. In the kitchen warming up some milk for Doctor Brand.

BRAND. Milk! For me?

FERGUSON. Certainly. My prescription. The very best thing you can take late at night. *(He chuckles.)*

BRAND. Fifty miles through the cold night air to get handed a cup of warm milk! Next time you can die before I'll come to the rescue. *(Laughs.)*

ALAN. I'll go out and help Vera. *(Exits L.C. FERGUSON and BRAND sit down at the table. WILLS has wandered to the alcove upper R., casually inspecting apparatus. THOMPSON sits on the edge of the couch L.)*

FERGUSON. It was decent of you to come without waiting to dress, Brand.

BRAND. Almost indecent, I should say. (*Chuckles at his own repartee.*)

THOMPSON. Are you sure you want us to stay, Chief? (*He makes as if to rise.*)

FERGUSON. Of course I am. Brand and I have no secrets. And Vera's counting on you to have a cup of something.

BRAND. Now, then, what is it all about, Ferguson? What happened to you a few minutes ago?

FERGUSON. Nothing to speak of. I dropped off to sleep at my desk here, and when I woke up I was there on the couch with Vera and these two silly idiots—(*Indicating WILLS and THOMPSON*)—working over me as though they were trying to bring me back from the dead.

BRAND. (*Looking suspicious*) And you didn't wake up when they moved you from the desk to the couch?

FERGUSON. I did not. I was dead tired.

BRAND. What time did you drop off to sleep?

FERGUSON. The last time I remember looking at my watch it was eleven point six seven before midnight.

BRAND. And who discovered you asleep?

FERGUSON. Vera. I had given her strict orders to stay out of the lab, as I wanted to do some extremely ticklish work, involving complete concentration. She went off to her room. But evidently she got worried about me, or her curiosity got the better of her—she's a woman—and so a little while ago, it must have been about half-past two, I suppose, she looked in and saw me asleep. That's all I know about it.

BRAND. Wills, how about you and Thompson? Where were you?

WILLS. (*Coming down c., R. of table*) Thomp-

son and I were working in the big lab when we got a buzzer call from this office. We thought the Chief wanted us, so we hurried right over. When we got here we found Vera standing in the middle of the room rather dazed, and the Chief sound asleep in his chair by the desk yonder. (*Points to desk.*)

BRAND. You say Vera seemed dazed?

WILLS. Yes. She had a peculiar look, and she found difficulty in saying what she wanted to.

BRAND. Thompson, did you notice these symptoms in Vera?

THOMPSON. Oh, yes, Doctor. She was quite dazed.

BRAND. Had she rung the buzzer for you and Wills to come?

THOMPSON. Yes, she had. She said she was frightened.

BRAND. Frightened for herself or for her father?

WILLS. For both. (*FERGUSON sits silently, following the examination carefully as though to learn more than he knows.*)

BRAND. What frightened her?

THOMPSON. Well, you see, for one thing she couldn't wake her father.

BRAND. She had tried?

THOMPSON. Yes. She had shaken him and called to him and even pinched him. And then he was quite cold to the touch.

BRAND. Was that all that frightened her?

THOMPSON. No, there was something else—— (*VERA and ALAN enter L.C., each bearing a tray filled with steaming pots of coffee, tea, milk and bouillon, and with six cups and saucers, spoons, etc., and small sandwiches and cakes. They come down and place the trays on the table before BRAND and FERGUSON.*)

ALAN. (*As he enters*) Breakfast is served, gen-

tlemen. Every beverage known to man is included on the menu.

VERA. Sorry to be so long about it, but the milk wouldn't get warm.

BRAND. (*Groaning*) Oh, Lord! (*He rises*) Good morning, Vera. I trust you will forgive my negligée.

VERA. Poor Doctor Brand, how could I help forgiving you when I am to blame for getting you here in a hurry. (*Seriously*) Do you think Father's all right again?

FERGUSON. Don't be silly, Vera. Do I look ill?

VERA. You still look tired. Besides, I asked Doctor Brand, not you.

BRAND. I haven't examined your father yet, Vera. We were just having a chat about things in general, and Thompson and Wills were telling what they know of the case. I want your story, too.

VERA. You can have it as soon as we have settled who's drinking what. (*She is busy arranging cups, etc.*) Come on, all of you. Gather 'round the teapot. Mr. Wills! And you'd better move over here, too, Mr. Thompson. Alan, you sit at the end and help pour. Name your drinks!

BRAND. (*Loudly*) Whiskey and soda for me.

VERA. (*Handing him a full steaming cup*) Hot milk, did you say? Here you are! (*The other MEN laugh at him.*)

BRAND. Oh!

VERA. We must take good care of our doctors, or how can they take good care of us?

BRAND. I'll kill the whole lot of you when I get a chance.

VERA. Father, here's your precious beef extract, double strength.

FERGUSON. Thank you, Vera.

VERA. Mr. Wills?

WILLS. (*Who is now seated at table*) Tea for me, please. With sugar and cream.

VERA. Mr. Thompson?

THOMPSON. Coffee, please. Black.

BRAND. Tut, tut, Thompson. You won't sleep the rest of the night.

THOMPSON. (*Grinning*) I don't want to.

VERA. Alan?

ALAN. Tea, please. With lemon.

VERA. Haven't any lemon. Try again.

ALAN. Extra sugar, then.

BRAND. Don't forget yourself, Vera.

VERA. I'm not. I'm having some of your hot milk, Doctor.

BRAND. Well, then, I don't mind so much. Here's how! (*Drinks*) Ugh! I feel like a baby. (*ALL busy themselves with their drinks.*)

ALAN. Isn't it amazing that so few people drink intoxicating liquors any more? I was reading only today in the Scientific Bulletin that ever since the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment there has been a steady falling-off in liquor consumption.

FERGUSON. That's human nature, Alan. It's always perverse.

BRAND. I wish you wouldn't bring up this subject when I'm drinking milk. Just because the rest of you are so damnably scientific in your diet——

VERA. There, there, Doctor. Don't pretend you're a drunkard. We know you're not. You only like to pretend you're wicked because you think it makes you more fascinating.

BRAND. (*Grunts scornfully and pushes the milk away from him*) And now, let's hear the rest of this story. Thompson tells me, Vera, that you were frightened when you found your father asleep. Were you?

VERA. (*Very seriously*) Of course I was frightened. He wouldn't wake up. I did everything.

Then I called Wills and Thompson by the buzzer. I knew they were working late, because I had seen the lights on in the big lab.

BRAND. Then what?

VERA. They came right away and helped me get Father onto the couch.

BRAND. Still unconscious?

VERA. Yes. Then I got Alan out of bed and sent him flying to bring you.

FERGUSON. (*Smiling*) And, meanwhile, I woke up feeling fine.

VERA. Thank heaven!

BRAND. Thompson says when he and Wills entered the room you looked dazed. Did you feel that way?

VERA. (*Recollecting painfully*) Yes, I did. It was awful!

BRAND. Was it simply being frightened by your father's condition?

VERA. Partly. But there was something else—something——

BRAND. Yes? (*He and the OTHER MEN lean forward expectantly.*)

VERA. It's very hard for me to explain. I have never experienced anything like it before. I think it was because of the flash.

FERGUSON. The flash? (*Concealing his excitement*) What do you mean, Vera?

VERA. (*Slowly, as if giving important testimony*) When I first went over to Father to waken him I touched his arm—like that—(*She leans over and touches FERGUSON*) —and at that moment there was a flash that seemed to run up my arm and neck and stop suddenly here—(*Feeling her mouth*) —on my lips.

BRAND. An electric spark, no doubt. Was your father holding any instrument at the time?

VERA. Yes, the ray analyser.

THOMPSON. But Wills and I examined the analyser when we took it out of the Chief's hand, and we found the insulation to be perfect. The flash could not possibly have been an electrical spark.

WILLS. That's quite right.

BRAND. Hm! And it was this flash that dazed you, Vera?

VERA. I felt terribly strange, a bit numb, and my thoughts didn't come easily——

WILLS. It was just as though she had been hit on the head. We asked her what color the flash was, and she couldn't decide. At first, she thought of sunlight. Then she rejected that. Presently, she hit on starlight and seemed sure that was the right description. But still she wasn't satisfied. Then I suggested that perhaps the flash had been the color of one of the sharp lines crossing the spectrum of starlight. She agreed, but with an important reservation. It was *not* one of the lines in ordinary starlight. The flash, she said, had been *exactly the color of that unique green line which occurs in the spectra of nebulae and nowhere else in nature.*

FERGUSON. *(Cannot contain his excitement longer. Rises suddenly and pushes his cup and saucer away from him with a clatter which is startling)* I feared it! *(The OTHERS look at him.)* And now I know it!

VERA. What do you mean, Father?

FERGUSON. *(Quietly but dramatically)* You, Thompson, and you, Wills, can guess what I mean. The rest of you will discover soon enough. Doctor Brand, you were right in coming here tonight, though there is nothing you can do for me. You will have your hands full inside of twelve hours. The whole world will be sick.

BRAND. *(Rising)* Good heavens, Ferguson! Impossible. *(WARN Curtain.)*

FERGUSON. Inevitable! There is not a moment

to lose. I knew it when I came to my senses a few minutes ago, but I needed Vera's testimony to make me doubly sure. There is no longer any doubt. Thompson, you and Wills must return to the other laboratory immediately and follow the instructions I gave you this morning. (*He speaks faster and faster*) Vera, you can help me with the computations. Alan, you had better drive Doctor Brand home at once. He will be needed at the office of the Department of Public Health before he has snatched two hours of sleep. There will be little or no sleep for any of us until——

VERA. Until when, Father?

FERGUSON. Until the world is saved or lost. (*He moves swiftly to the great windows at L.*) Look through this window at the northern sky. Alan, turn off the lights so we can see better. (*ALAN dashes to the wall at back, between the two alcoves, and presses a button. The stage goes dark. The OTHERS follow FERGUSON to the window.*) Now, what do you see? (*A strange GREEN LIGHT pours into the room, turning the faces of the characters a ghastly hue.*)

BRAND. Good Lord! What's happening?

VERA. It's the same green fire that ran up my sleeve!

FERGUSON. Quick, now, to work!

THOMPSON. My God, Chief, have we got time?

FERGUSON. No one knows. (*The CHARACTERS scatter in the darkness.*)

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT I

SCENE II

Same setting as Scene I. The next morning at eight-fifteen o'clock. SUNLIGHT floods through the great window at L. and illuminates the curved alcove. FERGUSON is seated at desk in the alcove, busy with electrical instruments and with various computations on paper. SUSIE is clearing away coffee pot and cups from the table L.

SUSIE. You won't have any more coffee then, Mr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON. (*Without looking up*) No more, thank you, Susie.

SUSIE. I should think after being up all night you would need plenty of stimulant to keep you awake.

FERGUSON. I'll keep awake all right, Susie. There are greater stimulants than coffee.

SUSIE. But you're not taking to liquor, are you, sir, at your age?

FERGUSON. (*Smiling, but keeping right on working*) No moonshine for me. *I prefer starshine.* Even when it's green.

SUSIE. (*Not understanding*) Starshine! Whoever heard of a drink called starshine? You're joking, Mr. Ferguson.

FERGUSON. (*In a low, preoccupied voice*) I didn't say it was a drink. I said it was a stimulant.

SUSIE. (*Wiping off the table with a cloth*) Well, if you can get drunk on starshine, you're welcome to it. But speaking of things being green—did you ever see the world as bright as it is this morning? Just like it had been washed and polished.

FERGUSON. (*Interested*) So you noticed that, did you, Susie?

SUSIE. Notice it? I thought I was dreaming. The grass was greener than any green I ever looked at. And the leaves on the trees the same way. Very odd how it could happen so sudden. Just over-night it happened. And there was no rain either.

FERGUSON. No. There was no rain.

(*Enter VERA, followed by ALAN, from R. They are dressed in light sports clothes.*)

VERA. I'm terribly sorry, Alan, but I can't possibly help you with those equations this morning. I've promised to play golf with David. He's coming past here for me at half-past eight. (*She looks at her watch*) He'll be here in less than half an hour.

ALAN. Play golf! You're going to spend the forenoon chasing a rubber ball when all the rest of us are working like mad here at the lab! Vera, you can't! (*Turning upstage*) Can she, Father?

FERGUSON. Can she what, Alan?

ALAN. (*Expostulating*) Your own daughter talking about playing golf with that long-legged Scotchman, today, of all days! It's inconceivable.

FERGUSON. If I were you, Alan, I wouldn't worry about Vera. She has plans of her own.

VERA. (*Triumphantly*) Aha! Take that, will you, young man.

ALAN. (*Seriously*) Oh, I see. The golf is only camouflage. Is that it?

VERA. More or less. (*To SUSIE, who is starting*

toward door L.C. with a trayful of coffee things)
Oh, Susie, is there any coffee left?

SUSIE. (*Setting the tray down*) There's a bit here, Miss Vera, though I doubt that it's very warm.

VERA. That's all right. I'll drink some anyway. (*SUSIE pours her a cup.*) Have some, Alan?

ALAN. No, thanks.

(*SUSIE exits L.C. with the tray full of things. VERA goes toward window L., sipping her coffee as she goes.*)

ALAN. (*Watching VERA*) So you're planning to capture MacRobert, are you?

VERA. Oh, be quiet, Alan! Can't you use your intelligence? Don't you know we've *got* to get him into the Independent? Don't you know he's the most brilliant Mathematical physicist in America—probably in the world—and Father's got to have him to beat Jevic?

ALAN. I'm sorry. I should have guessed you had a good reason. I thought you only wanted to flirt with him.

VERA. Flirt with him? (*She laughs and nearly strangles on a swallow of coffee*) I'd like to see the female who could flirt with David.

ALAN. Well, he's in love with you. He must show some signs of interest when you're around.

VERA. (*Coming to table and setting down cup*) Alan, you're too stupid for words. Don't you know that when a Scotchman is interested in anyone or anything he spends all his time concealing the fact? If David showed the slightest interest in me, I'd know he couldn't possibly be in love with me.

ALAN. He's a plain damned fool, if you ask me.

VERA. No, he's not. He's a very fancy damned fool. And besides, no one is asking you. (*Door BUZZER rings.*)

ALAN. Someone at the door. It can't be the Scotchman yet, surely. (*Goes to door R. and opens it to admit DOCTOR BRAND, who enters hurriedly, greatly excited*) Oh, good morning, Doctor Brand. Come in.

BRAND. Morning, Alan. Morning, Vera. (*Takes off his hat and gloves*) Ah, Mr. Ferguson, how do you feel?

FERGUSON. (*Without rising*) Good morning, Doctor. You're around early.

BRAND. (*Speaking rapidly*) No choice in the matter. Urgent call from headquarters an hour ago, reporting serious outbreak of an unknown disease among the workers in the mining areas. I wanted to speak with you before I went to the office. I have an idea you can help explain what I need to know.

FERGUSON. (*Rising and coming down c. near BRAND*) In the mining areas, eh? (*Nods his head slowly*) Quite to be expected.

BRAND. Then you can give me an explanation of what——

FERGUSON. (*Lifting his hand*) Not an explanation, but a hint. The disturbance in the northern sky which we witnessed a few hours ago is undoubtedly the cause of this disease from which the workers are suffering. Although the disturbance reached its height at about half-past three this morning, and by five o'clock was no longer perceptible, its effects may well continue for days. A chemical activity has been started which is certain to diminish, but before it does so, there may be considerable suffering.

BRAND. But how are we to treat the victims?

FERGUSON. As you would for burns from radioactive metals. That's as near as I can come to prescribing.

BRAND. And what about preventive measures?

FERGUSON. Have the men wear protective garments made of lead-actinite fabric.

BRAND. Of course, but by the time we can outfit them the worst of the suffering will be over.

FERGUSON. Perhaps so. But there may be a recurrence of the phenomenon. Better be prepared.

BRAND. There is no possible way of averting such a recurrence?

FERGUSON. (*Shrugging his shoulders*) If we only knew! We are working hard, but meanwhile Jevic has the power to stir up no end of trouble.

BRAND. You mean, Ferguson, that Jevic is actually responsible for last night's disturbance—the green fire?

FERGUSON. I feel sure of it.

VERA. Father! How awful! You didn't tell us that before.

FERGUSON. I didn't intend to even now, but it doesn't matter. It would have come out eventually.

ALAN. But how the devil can Jevic——

FERGUSON. (*Lifting his hand*) Never mind, Alan. The explanation is highly involved.

BRAND. Granted that Jevic has this power, what can be his purpose in doing anything so fiendish? Is it only to test a theory?

FERGUSON. Partly that—yes. He is on the track of something immense, something that few of us have dreamed of. But that is not his only reason.

BRAND. What is another?

FERGUSON. (*With a wry smile*) To send us a little warning.

VERA. A warning of what, Father?

FERGUSON. A warning to stay out of his field of experiment. To quit the race for control of the earth through the release of atomic energy.

ALAN. You mean he wants to scare us out?

FERGUSON. Of course. He's afraid we might beat him to the great discovery. He knows if we do, he

will be at our mercy. The day the atom is under our control, Jevic and his Consolidated Power Company are through. Completely down and out.

BRAND. And if he wins?

FERGUSON. Then we may as well destroy ourselves, for the world will be in the hands of a ruthless tyrant, more cruel and more powerful than a hundred Caesars.

BRAND. And what are the chances of his winning?

FERGUSON. Better than ours. He has a head start.

BRAND. Good heavens! (*BUZZER sounds twice.*)

FERGUSON. That's Thompson calling from the big lab. He wants you, Alan. I told him to call here when he was ready for the computations. Better hurry.

ALAN. Right. See you later. (*Exits quickly L.C.*)

VERA. Should I go too, Father?

FERGUSON. No; I'd rather you stayed here. Besides, you have a golf engagement presently.

BRAND. (*Startled*) Golf? This morning!

VERA. Sounds mad, doesn't it, considering what we've just heard Father say?

FERGUSON. It's all right, Doctor. Vera's golf is only camouflage for more important matters

BRAND. I see.

(*SUSIE enters L.C.; comes to table and takes coffee cup left there by VERA.*)

FERGUSON. And now, Doctor, if you don't mind, I'll get back to my work. Minutes are too valuable to lose just now. (*Starts upstage.*)

BRAND. Of course. And I must get to the office. They're very much worried. But I can't get over what you said about Jevic. What a monster he must be! And a genius, too, I suppose.

FERGUSON. (*Turning back*) A genius certainly, and just as certainly a monster.

BRAND. He's only a name to me. Almost a myth. I've never even laid eyes on him.

FERGUSON. Few people have. He's very theatrical. He purposely hides from people in order to arouse their curiosity.

VERA. I've never seen him, either. What does he look like?

FERGUSON. He's a cold man. Dark, with the hard eyes of a murderer. Though he has a sense of humor.

BRAND. I presume he thinks it's funny to throw the universe out of order.

FERGUSON. Yes, he would think that funny, and decidedly worth doing as a dramatic stunt.

BRAND. He has no fear of the consequences?

FERGUSON. He has no fear of anything.

(*The BUZZER rings once, a long ring. EVERYONE starts. SUSIE, who has wiped off the table and is now on her way toward door L.C., sets the cup in the alcove and crosses toward door R.*)

SUSIE. It's the doorbell. See who it is.

FERGUSON. It must be your golf date, Vera.

VERA. It doesn't sound like David.

BRAND. So it's MacRobert who's playing golf with you, eh? He's another enigma if you ask me.

VERA. (*Laughing*) Oh, he's no enigma at all. You don't know him.

BRAND. Well, I've met him often enough, but I never get more than two words out of him at a time.

FERGUSON. Thrift, Doctor, Scotch thrift.

SUSIE. (*Now re-enters R., bearing a card. This she hands to FERGUSON*) This gentleman's waiting outside, sir. He asked to see you.

FERGUSON. (*Looks at the card, starts slightly, then hands it to BRAND*) Ask him to come in here, Susie.

SUSIE. Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

BRAND. Good God! It's——

FERGUSON. Sh! It is. You are welcome to stay if you wish to, Doctor.

BRAND. Thank you. I will. (*Hands the card to VERA.*)

VERA. (*Reading*) Mr. Boris Jevic!

(*SUSIE enters R., followed by JEVIC, who is dressed lavishly. SUSIE takes his hat and stick and puts them at upper R. JEVIC bows.*)

JEVIC. Mr. Ferguson.

FERGUSON. (*Bowing but not advancing*) Mr. Jevic. (*Then indicating the OTHER TWO, who nod in turn*) My daughter, Vera, and Doctor Brand. Can I be of service to you? (*Exit SUSIE L.C.*)

JEVIC. (*In a slow, heavy voice, with a trace of foreign accent*) Thank you. I have come to have a little business chat with you. (*He looks significantly at VERA and BRAND.*)

FERGUSON. I'm sure you won't mind these two. They are very close to me and my affairs. Won't you sit down? (*He indicates upholstered bench R.*) The furnishings here are not too comfortable, perhaps, but after all, this is a laboratory.

JEVIC. (*Sitting down and looking around the room*) Ah, yes, and a very pleasant laboratory, too. Very well lighted. (*FERGUSON draws a chair away from the table toward C. and sits down, facing JEVIC.*)

BRAND sits back of table, and VERA L. of table.)

FERGUSON. (*Significantly*) From the large window there—(*Indicating L. end of room*)—we have an excellent view of the northern sky.

JEVIC. (*Smiling*) I can imagine. (*After a pause*) I always enjoy the northern sky, especially at this time of year. Such gorgeous nebulae.

FERGUSON. So I noticed last night.

JEVIC. Yes?

FERGUSON. Or rather, early this morning. I hope you didn't miss the sight yourself.

JEVIC. I think I know what you refer to. I found it very interesting.

BRAND. (*Cutting in viciously*) A good many people are finding the phenomenon more painful than interesting, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. (*Looking at BRAND insolently*) Really? Why is that?

FERGUSON. Doctor Brand is referring to the disease which has broken out among mineral workers since last night's disturbance. It is his business, as head physician at the Department of Public Health, to investigate the matter and secure relief.

JEVIC. (*Nodding his head slowly*) I see. In that case, Doctor Brand, you have my deepest sympathy.

BRAND. (*Sarcastically*) Thanks!

JEVIC. If any of the employees in our laboratory are affected, I shall send for you.

BRAND. But surely, Mr. Jevic, you have taken precautions in the case of your own employees.

JEVIC. Precautions? You think, then, that I could anticipate this disturbance?

BRAND. Did you not anticipate it?

JEVIC. We scientists learn never to depend upon prophecy.

FERGUSON. You did not answer Doctor Brand's question directly, Jevic.

JEVIC. (*Maliciously*) I am sorry, but I did not come here to engage in small talk with Doctor Brand. I came to see you on business.

BRAND. Hello! There goes my radio-phone.

(Takes a small object the size of a watch from his pocket, releases a lever with a click, and immediately a VOICE is heard speaking, as over the radio. The audience can hear it distinctly.)

VOICE. Department of Public Health calling Doctor Brand. Take the message, take the message, take the—— *(BRAND clicks the switch on the instrument again, and the VOICE continues)* Doctor Brand will report at once to the Physician General at his office for consultation. Unknown disease spreading among metal workers throughout world. Symptoms: Blisters on body, particularly on hands and face, similar to those caused by emanations from radio-active metals. Victims display great physical uneasiness, high nervous tension and acute mental distress. Report at once.

BRAND. *(Snaps off the communication switch and replaces instrument in his pocket)* So, Mr. Jevic— *(Gets hat and coat at upper R.)*

VERA. Sorry you have to run off, Doctor Brand. Stop here on your way home, won't you?

BRAND. Thanks. I will, if it's not too late.

FERGUSON. And don't forget the lead-actinite fabric. It's the best bet.

BRAND. Thanks for the suggestion. I'll follow it up immediately. Mr. Jevic—— *(He bows ceremoniously with a scornful smile. Exits quickly R.)*

JEVIC. Doctor Brand doesn't seem to care much for me.

VERA. *(Blurting out)* You can surely guess why, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. *(With affected innocence)* Miss Ferguson, you startle me! What have I done to deserve the Doctor's enmity?

VERA. You know and we all know that you are responsible for last night's disturbance and for the suffering which has followed. If it was an accident,

then the world will perhaps forgive you, but if it was intentional, then——

JEVIC. (*Calmly*) I do not have accidents.

VERA. Then you are a menace to the world and should be locked up.

FERGUSON. (*Interposing*) Now, now, Vera! Mr. Jevic didn't come here to be scolded. He has been carrying on a very interesting experiment, and the results have been unfortunate for a good many people, but anything we can say will not change Mr. Jevic's interest in his experiment. (*To JEVIC*) I suggest that we come to the point of your visit.

JEVIC. (*Rendered somewhat sullen by FERGUSON'S cool treatment*) Exactly, Mr. Ferguson. You and I have known each other for twenty years—ever since you were a student in my classes in the University. When I left the University and became president of Consolidated Power I hoped that you would join my staff. You refused to follow me.

FERGUSON. (*Drily*) And do you know why?

JEVIC. I can imagine. You thought I was dishonest, cruel, and a menace to human welfare.

FERGUSON. I did.

JEVIC. You thought so twenty years ago. Do you still think so?

FERGUSON. I do.

JEVIC. Very well. In the twenty years since we parted company I have grown to be the most powerful man on earth. Five years ago Consolidated bought out its last rival, which happened to be Amalgamated Power of Soviet Russia. Since then we have enjoyed an absolute monopoly of the world's electric power, as well as control of all basic industries. We can starve any nation within a week. After centuries of fighting and bickering the nations of the world are united under one ruler. I am that ruler. My empire is such as Napoleon never dreamed of. You understand this, of course.

FERGUSON. (*Quietly*) I understand it very well. And frequently I shudder at the thought of it.

VERA. But, Mr. Jevic, if you hold this terrible power over everyone, why don't you use it wisely and generously to further human happiness?

JEVIC. To answer that question I should require at least an hour. I am a complicated person, Miss Ferguson, as your father will tell you. I have had a great deal of experience in my—by the way, how old would you say I was?

VERA. (*Coldly*) I am not interested in your age?

JEVIC. (*Smiling*) Oh, just to be polite—guess.

VERA. (*Curtly*) You look about forty-five, but you must be older than that if Father was in your class.

JEVIC. (*Happily*) You are quite right. I look forty-five. I am actually seventy-nine.

VERA. (*Laughing*) How absurd! You couldn't be.

JEVIC. Absurd, but true. And your father is——

FERGUSON. Fifty-three.

JEVIC. Fifty-three. Yet he looks at least ten years older than he is, and I look thirty-four years younger than I am. Isn't that extraordinary? It is even more extraordinary when you realize that all my life I have done at least five men's work. Your father—well, let us be generous and admit that he is equal to three men.

VERA. (*Rising and pacing the room*) How dare you make these insulting remarks about my father!

FERGUSON. Calm, my dear. Mr. Jevic is not far from the truth.

VERA. But what has all this to do with your visit here, Mr. Jevic?

JEVIC. A good deal. I want you and your father to realize that in opposing me you are fighting an impossible battle against impossible odds. You are throwing away your lives, and I will live to see you

helpless and broken. Ferguson, I have always liked you and admired your ability—even if I did have a hand in developing that ability. I know very well what lines you are working along. You are trying desperately to solve the problem of atomic energy. With that under your control you think you could smash me and wrest away my power. But you are too late. My own formulas are so advanced that I fully expect to release the energy of the atom inside a week.

FERGUSON. (*Startled and suspicious*) A week!

JEVIC. Perhaps in three days. I am on the verge of the great discovery. The greatest ever made by mortal mind. And then I shall be master not only of the earth, but of the universe itself. With that key I can unlock the energy of the stars, and if I choose, I can hurl the earth from its orbit, or dissolve it into gas. Ferguson, I am here to give you your chance. Come in with me—add your laboratories and your staff to mine, and together we will play at being God.

FERGUSON. (*After a moment of silence*) I prefer to be a man.

JEVIC. Then be a wise man and save your skin.

FERGUSON. Sell my soul to you and the Consolidated? Never!

VERA. (*Excitedly*) Good for you, Father!

JEVIC. Of course this heroism is all very well, but it doesn't fit into the world of nineteen-ninety. It smacks of the nineteenth century. As though you had been reading that dusty little Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen. Wake up, Ferguson! Don't be an idealistic idiot.

FERGUSON. (*Rising, stirred to anger*) You can't bully me, Jevic. I know why you came here this morning. It was not to save me. It was to save yourself.

JEVIC. (*Laughing loudly*) What's that? To save

myself? Wonderful! Would you mind explaining?

FERGUSON. Not at all. It is extremely clear. You have come to an impasse in your work. You have got so far in your search for the atomic formula and can get no further. With the miraculous secret at your finger tips, you have come to me to help you. You know that our combined staffs could reach the solution of the problem in a very short time. Your own staff has failed. You, yourself, have failed. The key had eluded you. If we should find it, you are lost. You know that our first action would be to smash Consolidated and to render you helpless. You are panic-stricken at the thought—as well you may be.

JEVIC. (*Rising and shouting at FERGUSON*) What rubbish! You're out of your mind, Ferguson. Do you think, second-rate scientist that you are—
(*The door BUZZER rings sharply three times. JEVIC stops short and turns quickly toward R.*)

VERA. It's David! (*Crosses quickly R. and opens door.*)

FERGUSON. (*Grimly*) Go on, Jevic. I am interested.

JEVIC. (*Gruffly*) I'll wait.

VERA. Come in, David. We have an unexpected caller.

MACROBERT. (*Enters R. He surveys JEVIC carefully. In a low, drawling voice, thick as oatmeal*) Good morning, Mr. Ferguson.

FERGUSON. Good morning, David.

MACROBERT. (*Turning to JEVIC*) And this, I believe, is the potential ruler of the universe. I'm more than glad to see you, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. (*Glaring*) And who, may I ask, are you?

VERA. Mr. MacRobert is a mathematical physicist. Surely you have heard of him.

JEVIC. (*His eyes lighting up, but not with love*) So you're David MacRobert, are you? The very

independent and insolent young man who has been insulting me in the newspapers.

MACROBERT. (*Grinning*) Quite right. And I was dying to lay eyes on you.

JEVIC. I hope you like my looks.

MACROBERT. (*Coolly surveying him*) Not so bad, for an old fellow.

FERGUSON. (*Amused but anxious to prevent trouble*) Suppose we keep the conversation on a professional basis. David, I understand you and Vera have a golf match in prospect.

MACROBERT. We have, and it bids fair to be a grueling match. Vera's a very canny player. Are you ready to go now, Vera?

VERA. All ready. My clubs are in the car. And I don't need a hat.

MACROBERT. Then we're off. (*Goes to door R.*) A very nice little show you put on last night, Mr. Jevic. You've an eye for a pretty spectacle.

JEVIC. I don't know what you're talking about.

MACROBERT. Then you must work in your sleep, for surely you're the only man in the world who could have set off the fireworks that I noticed in the northern sky a bit after midnight. The only man, I mean, with the exception of myself, and I was never much of a hand at fireworks. The Scotch are a very untheatrical people. Some of them are still Presbyterians.

VERA. (*At the door, tugging at MACROBERT's sleeve*) Come, David.

JEVIC. (*Wrathfully*) The Scotch are a people whose intelligence has proved equal to the task of chasing a rubber ball and hitting it with a club.

MACROBERT. Quite right. And in their spare moments between rounds of golf, with the little intelligence that is left them, they master the inconsequential problems of the universe. No Scot is such a reckless fool as to squander twenty-four

hours a day on the problem of atomic energy, Mr. Jevic. He can settle that between tea and supper.

JEVIC. (*Sneeringly*) Yes?

MACROBERT. And besides that, Mr. Jevic, I'd like to warn you that you had best stop tampering with the northern sky, for I've taken it as a province of my own, and I allow no trespassing. Good morning, Mr. Ferguson. Now, Vera, we're off. (*He and VERA exit quickly R.*)

JEVIC. (*In a rage*) I see your game now, Ferguson. You're counting on that long-legged, ill-mannered scoundrel of a MacRobert to solve the problem for you. I thought you had something up your sleeve.

FERGUSON. MacRobert has no connection with my laboratories.

JEVIC. (*Laughing*) I suppose not! But he plays golf with your daughter.

FERGUSON. He keeps his scientific work strictly out of our way.

JEVIC. What a pity! But you have hopes that your daughter will bring him 'round, eh?

FERGUSON. (*Pointing*) There's the door, Jevic.

JEVIC. I noticed it when I came in. Now see here, Ferguson. You're a game sport, but you know you haven't a chance to beat me. It's only stubbornness that keeps you from accepting my offer. This is the last time I shall make it. Think twice!
(*WARN Curtain.*)

FERGUSON. I've thought more than twice, but the answer is always the same. The answer is *no*.

JEVIC. (*Turns and gets his hat and stick*) Very well, you blundering idiot. I'm sorry I wasted so much time on you. (*Starts toward door R.*) Last night's experiment in my ray laboratory was intended as a signal of my coming triumph. It was meant for you.

FERGUSON. I know. I knew at the time.

JEVIC. Just a sample of what is to come.

FERGUSON. (*Crying out*) Jevic, you're mad! In Heaven's name, why do you want to destroy the world?

JEVIC. I do not want to destroy the world. Unless it becomes necessary to do so.

FERGUSON. What do you mean—necessary to do so?

JEVIC. When everyone is on his knees to me, then the world will be worth saving. Until then——

FERGUSON. And if humanity continues to oppose you——

JEVIC. Then I shall annihilate humanity.

CURTAIN



ACT II SCENE I. SETTING BY PASADENA COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

JEVIC's private laboratory. A deep, high-ceilinged room looking more like a luxurious drawing-room than a laboratory. Furnishings are exotic, some in the modernistic manner, others of Oriental origin. Eccentric and lavish, rather than in good taste.

Downstage Center is a massive desk, or rather two semi-circular desks, set with their ends a short way apart, the concave edges forming a circular space in Center, where a swivel chair permits JEVIC to face in any direction at his work. The two halves of this desk unit are set parallel with the footlights, so that openings wide enough for JEVIC to walk through are at Left and Right. The upstage half is covered with radiophone instruments and other electrical apparatus. The downstage half holds papers and books, and at either end is mounted a colored electric light bulb used for signaling from other rooms.

The space at Right and Left of the desk unit is covered by deep Oriental rugs, and at both Right and Left, a few feet distant from the desk, are carved teakwood benches partially covered with rich draperies. These are, of course, for visitors.

Down at extreme lower Right is a small sec-

retarial desk, where MISS ADAMS works at typing. A huge map of the world hangs on the wall behind this desk. Half way back in the Right wall is a large bronze and green door, which gives the impression of being able to resist any assault made upon it. This is the entrance used by visitors.

Nearly all the back wall is taken up by two great windows. Between the windows is a niche containing a massive image of Buddha. In the corners, Upper Left and Right, are mounted on pedestals a pair of grotesque but gorgeous Chinese enamel dragons. The windows are hung with long, straight curtains of a sheer yellow material.

In the Left wall, a little above Center, is a secret panel doorway leading to the ray chamber. In case it is found desirable to show the ray-chamber to the audience, as is suggested later on, it must be moved to Center, and a secret panel placed in the wall back of the desk. In this case the windows must be made smaller or else moved to the Left wall. This door slides in grooves or else lifts straight up. A bit further down along the Left wall is a jog, which marks the beginning of an alcove extending down to extreme Lower Left. This jog is in the same spot as the one used in the first setting, and may thus be left standing throughout. The great windows which filled the Lower Left wall during Act I, may either be moved around to serve in the back wall of the present scene, or else be covered with heavy drapes and left standing. In any event that space should be draped with a rich material in this scene, and before it, set at an angle like that of the wall, is a long, low dais covered with Oriental tapestries, rugs, and cushions. A step runs the whole

length of the dais. A small inlaid table stands behind the dais, and on it reposes a delicate jade image of Confucius. At the foot of the dais is a magnificent tiger skin rug.

It is two o'clock in the afternoon, and rich **SUNLIGHT**, mellowed by the yellow curtains, pours into the room, making more glorious than ever the Oriental colorings of the decorations. **JEVIC** is at, or rather in, his desk, his back to the audience. After a moment he emits an ejaculation, whirls swiftly around, takes a large sheet of paper from the downstage portion of the desk, and whirls back again, facing the window. Another moment of silence, then the **LIGHT** on the Right end of the desk flashes on. Shortly after this, the heavy door in the Right wall swings noiselessly open and **JUNE ADAMS** walks swiftly in. She wears a hat and is dressed for the street. As she turns downstage toward her desk the door closes automatically behind her. She lays off her hat and gloves and fixes her hair. The signal **LIGHT** has now gone off.

JEVIC. (*Without having looked up, and without turning from his work*) You found him?

JUNE. Yes, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. Well?

JUNE. Mr. MacRobert said to tell you he was not interested.

JEVIC. (*Swinging around savagely to face JUNE*) Not interested! He said that, did he? After you offered him the maximum figure I gave you?

JUNE. Yes, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. (*Smashing his fist down on the desk*) Damn Mr. David MacRobert! Damn all Scotchmen! They should be blown to hell. What under Heaven is he dreaming of, to turn down an offer

of thirty percent interest in Consolidated Power? A poverty-stricken, moth-eaten, down-at-the-heel youngster like that, refusing millions. I know what it means. It means that he's decided to go in with Ferguson. Poor old humanitarian Ferguson, whose energy is already burnt out. The girl is responsible. Vera Ferguson. MacRobert is a hard nut, but he's easy for a woman. You could come 'round him. You're prettier than the Ferguson girl. Why didn't you try your charms on him?

JUNE. He didn't seem any more interested in me than he did in your business proposal.

JEVIC. That's his way. He's shy. His feelings are all underneath. I know his type. Puritan stock. Hard-shelled and soft-hearted. Now see here—we've got to bring MacRobert into this laboratory. He's the one man who can help me. The one man whose mind can keep up with my own. If he won't come for money, he must come for love. It's your chance. Think of what it means! With MacRobert, we can master the universe. Then we can get rid of MacRobert.

JUNE. Get rid of him?

JEVIC. So many things can happen in a laboratory such as ours. You don't suppose for a moment, do you, that I want to have that dangerous young rascal around me the rest of my life? And, especially, if he is in love with you. You belong to me. (*He smiles savagely at her.*)

JUNE. (*Impassively*) Of course. (*A BUZZER sounds. JEVIC turns a switch and a clear, loud VOICE is heard speaking.*)

VOICE. Message for Mr. Jevic from Chief Engineer, African Branch, Consolidated Power. Are you ready? Take the message, take the—— (*JEVIC pushes another switch, and the VOICE continues*) New London, West Central Africa, Wednesday, July 7, two P. M., New York time. An electrical

storm of terrific violence has just destroyed the great central power plants under construction at Roosevelt Bay, Livingston Beach, and Point Stanley, on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza. Loss of life inconsiderable, but material loss estimated at least two hundred million pounds. Unusual feature of catastrophe is that all metal construction disintegrated to an ash, rendering salvage of materials useless and impossible. Await instructions. Morrison. Engineer in charge.

JEVIC. (*Leaping to his feet in a rage*) Damnation!

JUNE. What a terrible accident!

JEVIC. (*Shouting*) Accident! Accident! Would to God it were an accident! But it's nothing of the kind. It's war. It's the enemy's first shot, in reply to mine of last night. I gave them a dose of green fire, and they have answered with the destruction of our newest African plants. (*He comes out of the desk enclosure and paces up and down the front of the stage.*)

JUNE. Do you mean Ferguson has done this?

JEVIC. Ferguson? No. He hasn't got that far in his experiments. He's not more than half way to the formula involving transmission of disintegrating rays. It's MacRobert! That's who it is. He's caught up with me. Damn his long legs! That's why he's holding out against me. He knows he's got an even chance to beat me to the big secret.

JUNE. I remember now. He told me when I left him half an hour ago to be sure to be here by two o'clock, as he thought something interesting might happen about that time.

JEVIC. He did, did he? Very well, Mr. MacRobert. We'll look after you! You'll need to work faster than you've ever worked in your life if you keep up with us. (*He rushes back to his desk and presses a button*) I'll call Werner and get him busy

on these new formulas. Meanwhile, you will prepare a message for radio transmission to Morrison at the African stations to stay where he is and do nothing until he hears from me. Tell him to buy a gallon of whatever hard liquor they make in that part of the world and get as drunk as possible. He may as well enjoy himself while he gazes upon the ruins. (*The signal LIGHT L. end of desk flashes on.*) Werner's coming. He'll be surprised when he sees what I hand him. (*He chuckles in a hard, ironic tone. The secret panel door at L. slides open, and WERNER enters. He comes toward the desk.*)

WERNER. You called me, sir?

JEVIC. I did. I have a new formula for you. A new set of figures which I want tested at once.

WERNER. More disintegrating rays, sir?

JEVIC. Yes. But with a difference. These should be extremely effective, Werner. I want you to be careful. Otherwise, none of us may live to observe the results. You must conduct this experiment on a very small scale. You understand? If it accomplishes what I think it will, then we have an ace up our sleeve which puts us well beyond any fear of our enemies. Notice, I have carried these calculations to the ninth decimal. They check perfectly. Let me know the result in half an hour.

WERNER. Yes, Mr. Jevic. (*Starts out L. Turns back*) About the West African power plants, sir——

JEVIC. (*Rising, threateningly*) I know all about that. Get out!

WERNER. Yes, sir. (*Beats a hasty retreat. JEVIC presses a button at his desk, and the door L. slides open, letting WERNER through, then closes again.*)

JEVIC. Senile idiot! Almost ready for the scrap-heap. I need new blood in this laboratory. I've worn out all my men, and I can't find young ones with enough intelligence. If only MacRobert—ah! to hell with him! (*Sinks into his chair*) I'm the

youngest one of the lot, in spirit and in body. And what's more, I never intend to grow old. Do you hear that, my dear? Did you hear what I said?

JUNE. (*Seated at her desk, arranging papers*)
I'm sorry, I——

JEVIC. Then listen to me. *I said I never intend to grow old.*

JUNE. I think you're marvelous, Mr. Jevic. No one will believe you're more than half your age.

JEVIC. I am marvelous. And I shall go right on being marvelous. (*His voice has lowered to a musing tone, and his eyes are smoldering.*)

JUNE. I am sure you have many, many years ahead of you.

JEVIC. Years? That isn't what I mean. Not what I mean at all. I have had plenty of years. I am more interested in events now. A year means nothing of itself. It may be a blank and tedious succession of days. An event may take a week, a day, an hour, a minute. But that is what counts. That is what makes life. Duration is not life. I have lived because I have created events. Lots of them. I intend to create at least one more. The great event. Then I am through. It doesn't matter how short a time it takes. Magnitude—not duration. Magnitude, my dear. There is a point of magnitude beyond which consciousness would be unendurable—That is the final—Yes! Don't you see? It's quite—(*He has risen to his feet as though under mad inspiration*) —Oh, never mind. (*He passes his hand before his eyes.*)

JUNE. (*Sympathetically*) I'm afraid you've been overworking. You haven't slept enough the last few nights.

JEVIC. How can I sleep when my enemies do not sleep? Never fear. They will be the first to break. Anyway, I'm going to forget work for a little while. We'll give Werner time to test the new formula.

You see, I put my brains on paper, and they go on working in Werner's hands. That way I never really stop working. Half an hour. Luxury, luxury! Half an hour to play at being human. (*He comes out of his desk enclosure and crosses to the dais, lower L.*) Human—ha, ha, ha! Such an absurd existence. (*Throws himself down on the rugs and cushions full length*) Ah, yes. So soft! (*He gives a long sigh of physical satisfaction and relaxes his huge body*) Come over here, my dear. It is hard to be human—alone.

JUNE. Very well. If you wish. (*She rises from her work, crosses to dais and sits on step beside him*) Is this right?

JEVIC. Yes. Now I feel less lonely. (*After a pause*) You must think me a very strange creature, my dear. Don't you?

JUNE. I admire you, Mr. Jevic.

JEVIC. Of course. Who doesn't? But you think me strange, and perhaps dangerous, eh?

JUNE. I don't always understand you.

JEVIS. Who does understand me? Except myself. And there is a part of me that even I—but most of me is quite comprehensible. Even to a woman. Perhaps especially to a woman. I think someone ought to make the effort to understand me before—Well, I have at this moment a desire to be understood. A horrible, commonplace little desire, of course—but for half an hour perhaps, one's ridiculous humanity may be allowed—Listen—Fifty-one years ago I landed in New York, an immigrant from Serbia, with a smattering of English learned in school, and barely enough money to get me past the inspectors at Ellis Island. I wore top boots, blue dungarees, and a coarse red flannel shirt. I had neither hat nor coat. But I was twenty-eight years old, strong, and ambitious. I got a job digging sewers at three dollars a day. The man who gave me

the job was an ignorant, slave-driving contractor who saw in me only another damned ox of a foreigner to sweat for him in his filthy ditches. Had I told him that I possessed a knowledge of mathematical physics unequalled by any man of my age in the world, he would only have sneered and remarked that knowledge is cheap and a poor money-maker. Had he taken the trouble to inquire, I could have saved him money and labor in every trivial problem he met. But to him I was an ox, and the favorite butt of his obscenities. Slaving there in the muck of earth and sewage I resolved that some day I would put my boot on the neck of all such stupid swine as my employer.

JUNE. To think of you, the richest and most powerful man in the world today, having been treated like that!

JEVIC. One evening after work, feeling dead beat and heart-sick, I passed a book shop and saw on a bargain table a copy of Jovanovitch's poems. Jovanovitch, the marvellous singer of Serbia, whose poems had thrilled me as a boy in school. The book had been marked down to fifty cents. I could afford that. But when I handed it to the clerk he saw my eagerness to have it, and invented a lie, saying the price had been a mistake. The book would cost me five dollars. I paid his price, though it took all my ready cash. As I left the shop I swore that some day I would grind the hearts out of all such swindling, snivelling merchants.

JUNE. It was a miserable trick to play on you.

JEVIC. After a year of sweating labor I determined to make use of my brains. I went to the University and asked to see the President. When they asked my business I told them I was a mathematical physicist. They took me for a lunatic and had me thrown out of the office. You see, I was still wearing my red shirt.

JUNE. But you did finally get on the University faculty.

JEVIC. Yes, I did. But not until five years later, when I had saved enough from my earnings to set up a small laboratory in my room and conduct experiments which finally reached the ears of the professors. Then I was given an instructor's rank and salary. Ha, ha, ha! An instructor's salary! No more than I had been earning as a laborer. But, at least, I now had congenial work, and a fairly well equipped laboratory maintained by the State. In two years I had solved enough problems to make the University the greatest center of research in America. But do you know who got the credit for my work? The professors, my colleagues, who watched everything I did, stole the methods, and published them as their own. I was ignorant of such academic trickery at the time. I was very easy to steal from. When I finally discovered what was happening I formed a hatred of college professors, which has made me just a trifle severe on them as a class.

JUNE. But you stayed on at the University a long time.

JEVIC. Yes, I did. I wanted to stay until I had got even with all my thieving friends. I patented the process for the production of cold light—in use throughout the world now—and deeded the rights to the University on one condition—that I be allowed to remain on the faculty as long as I pleased, and to have full charge of the college of science. The President, a good business-man though otherwise a simpleton, jumped at the chance. The University became fabulously rich. And I had all my crooked colleagues fired. I replaced them with my own students. Werner was one of them. Ferguson was another. A good many of them are dead. Used up and thrown on the scrap-heap. I wore them out. Twenty years ago I left the University and became

President of Consolidated Power, with fifty-one percent of the stock in my control. I did that with my perfection of television. Since then I have had my own way in everything. For ten years I have worked on the atom. That is the final problem. There is nothing else man needs to make him master of his universe. And I feel that it is now a matter of hours until—*(He breaks off suddenly)*—Go to my desk, like a good girl, and look in drawer number nine. Bring me what you find. *(JUNE goes quickly into the desk enclosure, opens a drawer and lifts out something.)*

JEVIC. Don't be afraid to handle it. It has been sterilized. *(He laughs.)*

JUNE. Is this what you meant? *(She comes back to the dais carrying, neatly folded, a faded red flannel shirt.)*

JEVIC. *(Taking the shirt from her tenderly)* You see? You know what it is? *(He half rises and spreads out the shirt, holding it up for her to see)* My red shirt. Symbol of my days as a common laborer. I have kept it beside me all these years, saving it for that great day when I solve the final mystery. Then—*(His eyes and voice are fanatical)*—I shall wear it again. And the world shall know who is its master.

JUNE. How thrilling! *(She appreciates the dramatic quality of his idea.)*

JEVIC. Thrilling! *(Laughs)* If you could only guess how—— *(He is interrupted by the sounds of a BUZZER. The signal LIGHT at R. of the desk flashes on.)*

JUNE, *(Rising hastily)* Someone is calling.

JEVIC. Damn them! My half hour isn't—well, see who it is. *(JUNE crosses quickly to the desk and speaks into an instrument.)*

JUNE. Who is it, please? *(She throws a switch. A VOICE speaks.)*

VOICE. Mr. Ferguson, with his son and daughter, are here to see Mr. Jevic. Instructions, please.

JEVIC. Aha! So Ferguson's come 'round. I thought so. Let him in.

JUNE. (*Speaking into the instrument*) Mr. Jevic will see them at once. (*Throws switch and returns to her own desk.*)

JEVIC. Things are breaking fast. In a little while now—— (*He hides the red shirt.*)

(*The great door R. swings open and the THREE FERGUSONS enter. The door closes after them. They look around in amazement at the richly furnished room, and are surprised not to see JEVIC, who remains on the dais.*)

JUNE. (*Going upstage to meet them*) Mr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON. (*Turning toward her, startled*) Ah, yes.

JUNE. I am Miss Adams—Mr. Jevic's secretary. This, I presume, is your daughter. And your son.

FERGUSON. Quite right. (*VERA and ALAN acknowledge the introduction.*)

JUNE. You seem interested in the room.

FERGUSON. It is the first time I have seen Mr. Jevic's laboratory.

VERA. (*Smiling*) It's rather different from ours.

ALAN. Different! Good Heavens, is this really a lab?

JUNE. (*Laughing nicely. She likes ALAN's looks*) It really is. What do you think it looks like?

ALAN. A harem.

JUNE. (*Rather embarrassed*) Oh, really, it's not that bad.

JEVIC. (*Booming out in a loud voice*) It is a harem. You're quite right, young man. All that's

lacking is the wives. (*The FERGUSONS are startled to know that JEVIC is in the room.*)

FERGUSON. Ah, Mr. Jevic is here. I'm sorry, I didn't see him.

JEVIC. Come over here, Ferguson. And bring your family with you. I won't bite. (*FERGUSON crosses to L. of desk, VERA and ALAN following.*)

FERGUSON. What's the matter? You're not ill, are you, Jevic?

JEVIC. (*Mischievously*) No such luck, Ferguson. I'm not going to fall ill and let you run the world. This is my half hour of being human. And you interrupted it after the first ten minutes.

FERGUSON. I'm sorry. If I had known——

JEVIC. Never mind. I wouldn't have let you in if I hadn't wanted to see you. And you could never in a thousand years break through that door. There's no other door like it.

FERGUSON. I thought it looked a bit impregnable.

JEVIC. It not only looks it. It is. It was made in my own laboratories.

VERA. And I suppose it's as hard to get out of this room as it is to get into it.

JEVIC. Of course. Does that thought make you nervous?

VERA. (*Laughing*) Not at all. I couldn't imagine a better room in which to breathe my last.

JEVIC. Thanks. Sit down, please. If you don't mind, I'll stay where I am. It's extremely comfortable. (*FERGUSON and VERA sit on bench L. of desk, facing JEVIC. ALAN engages JUNE in conversation. They move away upstage.*)

JUNE. If you're really so curious about the porcelain figures, I'll show them to you.

ALAN. Thanks. If Mr. Jevic doesn't mind.

JEVIC. Look around, young man. But don't fall through any trap-doors. (*He laughs.*)

FERGUSON. Jevic, since our talk this morning I have been thinking.

JEVIC. A not unusual process for a man of intellect.

FERGUSON. And I have come to suggest a possibility of our joining forces.

JEVIC. Excellent. I thought you'd see the light.

FERGUSON. I see *a* light, though I'm not at all sure it's the one *you* see. Jevic, the time has come for us to stop deceiving each other. The future of the world, and of man's existence, rests with us. We both hope within a short time to be able to release the energy in the atom. You, perhaps, have formulas more advanced than ours. But we have the most skilled experimenters. We need your formulas. You need our skill. Should you discover the secret first, you will have the world in the palm of your hand. And one hour's possession of the secret will be enough, if the knowledge is mishandled to wreck the world. We do not dare risk that.

JEVIC. (*Narrowly*) In other words, you consider me a bungler.

FERGUSON. I consider you a potential destroyer of the world. The rays you directed against that nebulae last night. Did they accomplish exactly what you intended and no more? Or did they perhaps get slightly out of hand? Answer that.

JEVIC. My intentions toward the nebulae are none of your business.

FERGUSON. I understand your evasion of the question. Now, with even more powerful formulas with which to experiment, I predict that your control will be even less firm. You are a creator, Jevic—a creator of the first order, but your staff is incompetent. Give them the atomic formula to play with, and they will annihilate us all.

JEVIC. (*Slowly*) And what is your proposal, exactly?

FERGUSON. That you give us a controlling interest in Consolidated Power.

JEVIC. (*Sitting bolt upright*) A controlling interest? Is that all?

FERGUSON. Yes. Fifty-one percent of the stock. Which would mean that our men would be in control of your laboratories and would carry on the experiments, following your formulas.

JEVIC. What a pretty arrangement! You and your assistants, having failed at the problem, and knowing that I have or will shortly have the solution, offer to move into my laboratories bag and baggage, take my formulas, take my company, take everything, and then run the world to suit yourself.

FERGUSON. Why not? You will be given full credit for the discovery, and you will continue to be fabulously rich.

JEVIC. Rich! What is money to me? I have passed that stage. Don't be an idiot, Ferguson. Go on home and get what satisfaction you can out of blowing up some more of my power plants.

FERGUSON. (*Rising, insulted*) I have had nothing to do with your power plants.

VERA. (*Also rising*) What do you mean, Mr. Jevic?

JEVIC. What? You pretend not to know that my West African plants were destroyed at two o'clock this afternoon by rays transmitted from this country?

FERGUSON. The bulletin said it was an electrical storm.

JEVIC. Of course it did. But it wasn't. Come, come, Ferguson. I'm not a simpleton. Of course it was your young Scotch friend, David MacRobert, who handled the rays, but he was surely working in your laboratory under your direction.

VERA. He was doing nothing of the kind. He played golf with me, then went straight home.

FERGUSON. I have not seen David since this morning.

JEVIC. Then he has betier apparatus of his own than I suspected.

FERGUSON. I can hardly believe this.

JEVIC. Go and ask him. I know. And don't come around me with any propositions calling for a controlling interest in Consolidated Power. Miss Adams, will you show our friends through the door? (JUNE and ALAN come down.)

JUNE. I'm sorry you must go. (*This is chiefly for ALAN's benefit.*)

ALAN. So am I. Mr. Jevic, I think you have marvellous taste.

JEVIC. In secretaries? You're entirely right, my boy. But then, of course, in a harem one must have at least one pretty face. (JUNE goes to desk and presses a secret button. The door R. swings open.)

FERGUSON. Then we've come to quits, have we, Jevic?

JEVIC. Obviously. I'm sick of arguing. Goodbye, in case I don't see you again.

FERGUSON. And what do you mean by that?

JEVIC. Well, we bunglers, you know—— Goodbye, Miss Ferguson. Very nice of you to come. Sorry the conversation was so dull. How uninteresting the atom is, after all. Only good for blowing things up. No topic for a pleasant chat. Miss Adams will show you out.

VERA. (*Pulling FERGUSON to R.*) Come, Father. I think the quicker we leave, the better. Come, Alan.

ALAN. Goodbye, Miss Adams. I hope to see you again some time.

JUNE. I hope so. (*She gives him a smile. The FERGUSONS hurry through R. door, which closes after them. JUNE stands for a moment looking at the closed door.*)

JEVIC. Now, my dear, will you go to the desk

and look for a large sheet of yellow paper which is covered with mathematical computations. It is right in the center of that pile of rubbish. (*As JUNE does so.*) You will know it because across the top is written in capital letters the word *ultima*. Do you find it?

JUNE. (*Holding the sheet up*) Yes; here it is.

JEVIC. Good. I want you to put that in drawer number three. The drawer is locked, but you know the combination. I mustn't have that sheet lying around loose. If Ferguson could have had two minutes' look at that——! (*Laughs maliciously*) *Ultima, ultima!* What crimes are to be committed in thy name! (*JUNE puts the paper in the drawer.*) Fortunately, my dear, you cannot read mathematical formulae. And besides that, you are the soul of honesty. A rare woman. Now we can continue our tête-à-tête. (*JUNE comes back to the dais and sits beside him.*) A very rude interruption it was, too. And just as I had reached my climax.

JUNE. What did you do with the red shirt?

JEVIC. Hid it under this rug to keep curious Fergusons from asking silly questions. (*He draws it out from its hiding place*) I want it to be a surprise—especially to the Fergusons. (*Laughs*) You remember the parable of the loaves and fishes in the old Hebrew poem? Well, that's the way it will be with this shirt of mine. I'll divide it and keep dividing it until the multitude is fed. Everyone will eat my red shirt. And won't they like it!

JUNE. Why do you dislike the Fergusons, Mr. Jevic?

JEVIC. Because they're stupid. They want to perpetuate this idiotic world so it will continue to be a nice place for idiots like themselves to inhabit.

JUNE. I thought they seemed quite bright.

JEVIC. You mean the young man had bright eyes. Ah, you're a woman, my dear. Wouldn't you and

he make a nice match? In a little cottage with a garden. I know. But that's too stale a story. It's been repeated often enough. Time now for a change. How much more interesting to meet each other in space—an affinity of free electrons. That's romance for you! Meanwhile, I wish you would hold my hand.

JUNE. (*Hesitating*) Oh, I——

JEVIC. Come, come. Let's be silly. This is the children's hour! I have a particular reason. (*He holds out his hand. She takes it.*) Thank you. A very small, soft hand. And to think that it is nothing but atoms! (*He sighs*) At this moment I feel excessively lonely. More lonely than I have ever felt in my life. You don't know why that is. But never mind. Now will you please ring for Chung? The button's right behind you. (JUNE *presses a button in the wall.*) That's right. I want Chung to bring us something unusually nice.

JUNE. Something to eat?

JEVIC. No, something to drink. What would you like?

JUNE. I don't think I care for anything, really. If you don't mind.

JEVIC. But I do mind. You must think of something. Just this once. I command it.

(*The signal LIGHT at L. goes on, and the door L. opens. CHUNG comes noiselessly into the room and approaches the dais.*)

JUNE. You decide, please. I can't.

JEVIC. Chung! I want you to bring two glasses of liqueur number thirty-nine. Quick! (CHUNG, *bowing, but without a word, exits L. The door closes behind him, and the signal LIGHT goes off.*)

JUNE. Number thirty-nine? What is that?

JEVIC. Ah! A very special liqueur. It was made

in a monastery of Thibet, by some monks who no longer exist. And the formula died with them. I have the only bottle of the liqueur left in the world.

JUNE. Is it very good?

JEVIC. Good! There is no word to describe its excellence. It is scarcely of this world. Like the holy men who concocted it, it exists in spirit. Oh, a dreadful pun. I apologize. When you have tasted that liqueur you begin to know what the Buddhists mean by Nirvana.

JUNE. (*Rather frightened*) I don't like strong drinks.

JEVIC. Don't worry. It doesn't make you drunk. It's effect is quite different. Now I have one other request. Will you please get me some music on the radio.

JUNE. What kind of music do you want? (*He releases her hand. She stands up and reaches a dial on the wall back of the dais.*)

JEVIC. I want Slavonic music. Positively no other. Get one of the Serbian stations if you can. Try X29Y43.

JUNE. (*Turning the dial*) X29Y43. (*She throws a switch and immediately strains of bizarre MUSIC fill the room.*)

JEVIC. That's it. But softer. Softer! (*She tunes it down so that conversation can be heard above it.*) Charming! Charming! Now take my hand again. (*She sits down and takes his hand. They remain silent for a time. The music is weird and at the same time soothing. His eyes closed, speaking dreamily*) It is sixty years since I heard that melody. I was nineteen years old, and I was in love. (*He laughs sadly*) Young Boris Jevic. Poor young devil. How sad he was. How melancholy! And now old Boris Jevic. Even more sad! Even more melancholy! (*Silence again. Then the signal LIGHT at L. goes on; the L. door opens, and CHUNG enters,*

bearing on a tray two tall slender goblets of liqueur. He brings them to JEVIC's side.)

JUNE. Chung is here with the liqueur.

JEVIC. (*Opening his eyes*) Ah, yes. Hand me mine, will you, my dear? And then take the other for yourself. (JUNE *does so. CHUNG bows and retires swiftly through L. door, which closes after him. The signal LIGHT goes off.*)

JEVIC. (*Lifting himself on one elbow*) To the farthest star in the farthest nebula! (*He drinks slowly, tastingly. JUNE tastes hers.*) Don't hesitate. It will not hurt you. Don't you admire it?

(*WARN Curtain.*)

JUNE. It's not like anything else, is it?

JEVIC. Of course it's not like anything else. And there will never be any more like it. (*He drains his glass*) Which is just as well. There will be no need of liqueurs after tonight.

JUNE. (*Frightened*) What do you mean, Mr. Jevic?

JEVIC. I'm talking nonsense. It's the music. I haven't heard my own music for so long. (*He lets the glass slip down among the rugs. He lies back and closes his eyes*) I'm tired. It's very strange but I'm tired. And in a few minutes Werner's coming in to report on the test he's making. And I must be ready to tell him—— (*His voice trails off sleepily*) Ultima. Ultima—— (*He falls asleep.*)

(JUNE *watches him for a minute, then cautiously rises, sets her undrunk liqueur on the step of the dais, and moves away R. Then she crosses R.; straightens the papers on her desk and puts on her hat. She crosses toward the dais again and looks closely at JEVIC. Deciding that he is sound asleep, she goes swiftly into the desk enclosure, opens drawer number three and lifts out the yellow sheet of paper JEVIC had*

asked her to put away. As she lifts the paper out, a BUZZER sounds sharply. She starts in terror and watches JEVIC. He does not stir. The BUZZER sounds again. She throws the switch. A VOICE sounds.)

VOICE. Message for Mr. Jevic. Take the message, take——

JUNE. *(Throwing another switch, and speaking into the instrument)* Mr. Jevic is resting. He left orders not to be disturbed. *(She turns off the instrument; comes out of the enclosure; folds the paper quickly; thrusts it into her dress, and crosses to the dais. She lifts JEVIC's red shirt and lays it gently across his breast. Then she returns to desk; presses a button, and the R. door swings open. She walks rapidly out R. without a backward glance. The door closes behind her. JEVIC stirs slightly but again drops into a quiet sleep. The Serbian MUSIC continues softly his lullaby.)*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

FERGUSON'S laboratory again. It is four o'clock in the afternoon, and the STAFF is holding a council of war over the teacups. Seated around the long, low table are FERGUSON, VERA, ALAN, WILLS and THOMPSON. SUSIE goes back and forth during the early part of the scene, replenishing the plates of toast and cakes, as well as the teapot.

FERGUSON. So you see, don't you, that we are dealing with a madman.

WILLS. With a megalomaniac.

FERGUSON. Just so.

ALAN. Exactly what is a megalomaniac, Father?

FERGUSON. One who is mentally unbalanced, and who has delusions of grandeur.

VERA. The trouble is that Mr. Jevic's grandeur is not all delusion.

ALAN. I'll say it isn't! He has a grand studio and——

VERA. And a grand secretary, eh? Alan, I thought you were very silly to lose your head over that Miss——

ALAN. Adams is the name. June Adams. What a peach! And to think of her locked in that room with old Jevic. It gives me the woollies to think of it! I wish you'd offer her a job here, Father.

VERA. Father will do nothing of the kind. He's had a hard enough time trying to get some decent work out of you, without any flirtatious little creature like that around.

FERGUSON. As a matter of fact, Alan, I wish you *had* enticed Miss Adams home with us. I shouldn't mind at all an hour's conversation with her. I suspect she knows as much of Jevic's plans as anyone—if not more.

VERA. (*Laughing*) I can see Jevic letting his confidential secretary pay a visit to the Independent Laboratories! Besides, she wouldn't betray Jevic if she had the chance. She's devoted to him.

ALAN. Don't be too sure, Vera. I don't think she's in love with him.

VERA. Stupid! That's why she wouldn't betray him. Women always betray men they're in love with.

FERGUSON. At any rate there's not much use trying to kidnap the girl. Jevic would see that she was well protected. (*Sips his tea*) I say, does anyone else notice that something's wrong with the tea?

THOMPSON. Yes, sir. I have. I thought perhaps it was my own taste at fault.

FERGUSON. I'm sure it's not. (*Turning to SUSIE*) Susie, what did you do to the tea?

SUSIE. (*Startled*) Do to it, sir? Not a thing in the world. Is it too strong?

FERGUSON. No; it's not too strong. But it tastes—

THOMPSON. Of metal.

FERGUSON. That's it. Metal. As though it had been made in an old pewter pot.

SUSIE. It was made exactly as I always make it, sir. And as for pewter, or whatever you call it, I never knew there was such a thing. Shall I throw it out, sir, and make some fresh?

FERGUSON. Please do. If the second batch is like

this, we'll know there's something in the air. (SUSIE goes off L.C. with the teapot.)

ALAN. That's one argument in favor of using as much sugar as I do in tea. You can't taste anything.

VERA. Quite right. Not even the tea. You'd be very easy to poison, Alan.

ALAN. But, fortunately, no one wants to poison me. I'm too likeable.

VERA. Said he, without consulting his sister.
(BUZZER sounds twice.)

ALAN. I'll see who that is. (Goes to door R.)

FERGUSON. I hope it's David. I must ask him about those power plants that were blown up this afternoon. I can't quite believe—— (ALAN returns, followed by DOCTOR BRAND.)

ALAN. Glad to see you, Doctor. Come in. We're just having tea.

FERGUSON. Hello, Brand. You've caught us loafing again.

BRAND. (Having tossed his hat on the bench R., and coming across to the table) Good afternoon, everyone. Please don't move. (To VERA) May I sit here beside you?

VERA. Of course.

BRAND. Yes, for a busy scientific group, you people are rather leisurely. Have you discovered, perchance, that the world is not in danger after all?

FERGUSON. On the contrary.

WILLS. Mr. Ferguson has just convinced us that our worst fears were justified. He and Vera and Alan have just come back from seeing Jevic.

BRAND. Really? You mean to say you bearded the lion in his den?

VERA. And such a lion in such a den!

BRAND. Did he roar?

ALAN. He reclined on a Turkish rug like a Sultan and told us all to go straight to hell.

BRAND. Aha!

FERGUSON. I offered to join forces with him if he gave us controlling interest in Consolidated Power.

BRAND. I see. But you didn't really think he'd accept, did you?

FERGUSON. No; but I wanted to give him the opportunity. It was a chance to avert a catastrophe. And then I didn't know for sure what I know now.

BRAND. And that is——

FERGUSON. That Jevic is mad. I thought so this morning when he called on me. Our visit to him this afternoon dispelled all doubt on the subject. He is mad and dangerously so.

BRAND. Megalomania?

FERGUSON. Exactly.

BRAND. What's to be our course of action? Do you want me to file with the Department of Public Health a statement that Jevic is mentally ill and should be locked up, pending examination?

ALAN. A swell idea!

FERGUSON. (*Shaking his head*) A good idea, but it wouldn't work. Jevic is too powerful. The Department of Public Health would be afraid to take such steps. They'd all lose their jobs. Besides that, Jevic wouldn't let himself fall into their hands. He's guarded like an ancient emperor, and he's very particular about whom he admits to his private quarters. Even if they trapped him with the help of someone inside his laboratory, they couldn't hold him. He'd be released within an hour by order of the Supreme Court. And then what would happen to his erstwhile captors?

WILLS. Has anyone ever considered killing Jevic?

THOMPSON. (*Drily*) I have. Many times.

ALAN. Why not? If he's a menace to human safety, as you all agree he is, then it's a matter of public duty to put him out of the way.

BRAND. It's a debatable point. Murder is——

FERGUSON. No! Murder is not the weapon of science. Though Heaven knows science is often enough the weapon of murder. Much as I hate Jevic's principles, or lack of principles, and much as I fear him as a potential destroyer of the world, I could not tolerate the thought of killing him. It must be a fair fight in the realm of science.

ALAN. Father's nothing if not an idealist.

WILLS. We know he's right. But damn it, I wish he weren't.

VERA. At heart Father really admires Jevic. Don't you, Father?

FERGUSON. Of course I do. What scientist could help admiring Jevic's magnificent achievements? And he was once my teacher. But laying these considerations aside, I still would not condone the idea of murder as a means to a scientific end. Neither would Jevic—black-hearted as he is. Don't you think he could have destroyed us long ago had he chosen to use violence? We are his sworn enemies, yet our laboratories function in peace, using electrical power furnished by Jevic. With a set of disintegrating rays he could level this building in three seconds, and reduce all of us to an ash. And no one would dare prosecute him for the deed even if they suspected him of it. Jevic is not a humanitarian. He would kill thousands of men without a twinge of conscience if they were peasants or merchants, and if they stood in his way. But he would not use violence against his own kind. To do that would be to violate the first principle of the scientific spirit. And whatever else Jevic may be he is fundamentally a scientist.

BRAND. Extraordinary, isn't it?

THOMPSON. (*Rising*) You are quite right, Chief. We must win fairly or not at all. Which means that Wills and I have loafed long enough. Let us know

if anything exciting happens. We'll be working at that new lead and polonium theory. Come on, Wills.

WILLS. (*Rising*) Au revoir, everyone. (*They start toward door L.C., but before they reach it, SUSIE enters, bearing the fresh pot of tea. They step aside to let her pass.*)

SUSIE. Excuse me, sirs. Aren't you waiting to have a fresh cup of tea?

THOMPSON. Sorry, Susie! Duty calls. (*They go out L.C. SUSIE serves the tea.*)

VERA. A cup for Doctor Brand, please, Susie. And by the way, Doctor, you got beat out of your whiskey last night. Did you know that?

BRAND. What whiskey?

VERA. Father was playing a joke on you by serving you hot milk. As soon as you had drunk it we were going to serve you some of Father's choicest 1938 whiskey.

BRAND. Good heavens! And why didn't you?

VERA. Well, in all that excitement I simply forgot. Things grew a bit hectic, you know, when we saw what was happening in the sky.

BRAND. Of course. Well, I shall continue to hope that——

VERA. Would you like it now?

BRAND. No, thanks. Too early in the day for whiskey.

FERGUSON. I see your professional conscience is still sound, Doctor Brand. (*Exit SUSIE L.C.*)

BRAND. If you had as many patients as I have——

ALAN. That's so. How is the new disease getting on, anyway?

BRAND. We're checking it, though it's far from being in hand. If there are no more green fire episodes, I think we will pull everyone through all right. It's as much mental as anything.

FERGUSON. Confound it! This tea's worse than the first batch! There's something——

ALAN. Speaking of green fire, do the rest of you notice any change in the coloring of the atmosphere? I should say everything is turning slightly green.

VERA. Alan, you're color-blind.

BRAND. No, he's not. He's absolutely right. And it's happened within the last five minutes.

FERGUSON. (*Rising*) If Jevic—— (*He goes to window L.*)

ALAN. Somehow I don't like the idea of the world turning green. Like a great ball of spinach. Ugh!

VERA. What is it, Father?

FERGUSON. (*Looking at the sky*) By the Lord! There it is. Even in daylight you can make out the center of the disturbance! (*The OTHERS rise and cross toward the window.*)

BRAND. You mean it's a recurrence of the green fire, Mr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON. Yes, Doctor Brand. And if I'm any judge, this disturbance is worse than the other. It's apparent even in sunlight—so you can imagine what it would be at night. Jevic is playing with rays again, and there's no telling how far the distintegration process will spread. I warned him to be careful.

BRAND. And there's nothing you can do to——?
(*The BUZZER sounds three times.*)

VERA. (*Running to open the R. door*) That's David! He always rings three times.

BRAND. MacRobert, eh?

FERGUSON. Yes! Thank Heaven! We need him.

VERA. (*Opening door*) Come in, David. We're so glad to see you.

MACROBERT. (*Enters R., bareheaded*) I came to see your father. (*Crosses to C.*) Mr. Ferguson, I've come to speak to you on business.

FERGUSON. (*Still at the window*) It's about time, young man.

MACROBERT. You mean you think it may be too late?

FERGUSON. (*Pointing at the sky through the window*) You've seen that, have you?

MACROBERT. I have. (*He drops into a chair by the table*) I could do with a cup of tea, Vera. That golf this morning was a bit strenuous. I've been ravenous ever since.

VERA. You mean to say you didn't have any lunch? (*Pours him some tea.*)

MACROBERT. I had some work to do. (*He begins eating cakes like a starved man.*)

FERGUSON. (*Coming back to table and sitting, facing MACROBERT*) Did you blow up Jevic's West African power plants this afternoon?

MACROBERT. (*Without stopping his eating*) I did.

FERGUSON. Why?

MACROBERT. It was an error on my part. Slight miscalculation.

FERGUSON. Slight!

MACROBERT. Relatively. I didn't shoot straight. Missed my mark by nearly five hundred miles.

FERGUSON. What were you aiming at?

MACROBERT. Some worthless mountains in Central Africa. I needed something for a target. I was hasty in my calculations, with the result that I blew Jevic's billion-dollar project right to hell.

FERGUSON. I didn't know you were experimenting with disintegrating rays?

MACROBERT. Oh, yes.

FERGUSON. Why didn't you tell us? We'd have been glad to turn our ray-chambers over to you.

MACROBERT. I know you would. I say, what's the matter with this beastly tea? It's full of lead or something. Never tasted such stuff.

FERGUSON. Never mind the tea. The air is charged with metal. I want to know your idea in keeping the ray experiments to yourself, when you

know we've been working along the same lines. It looks as though you didn't trust us.

MACROBERT. (*Pushing tea and cakes away and sitting up straight*) Mr. Ferguson, I've been a stubborn idiot, and I'm sorry. I had the idea it would be glorious to beat Jevic single-handed. I've been working hard these last few weeks, thinking I'd solve the whole confounded problem of the destruction and recreation of matter. I've learned what I need to know about destruction, but I haven't yet got the rest. Neither has Jevic. Unless he's got something up his sleeve, he's not one jump ahead of me. The race might have gone on for months until one of us arrived at the creative formula. It might have, I say. But my blunder this afternoon spoiled the game. He takes the destruction of his plants as malicious on my part, and now he's determined to smash everything in sight. He's out of his head, I fear. By kicking up a fuss in the middle of Africa, I only meant to show him that he wasn't the only man with the disintegrating rays under control. But like a fool I missed the mark and set him in a blind rage. That's why I'm here now. We've got to join forces and prevent him, if we can, from destroying the whole blessed universe.

FERGUSON. If we can. (*After a moment*) Have you a plan of action?

MACROBERT. Not a complete one. But I think the first thing is to get access to his own laboratories, or at least to his sets of formulas. With his formulas we can prepare a counteraction of some kind. It may not work, but I think it will. At least if we set it going soon enough. The damage is still rather remote. He has destroyed two of the most distant nebulae. The wave of disintegration is still a long way from the earth. But it is traveling. And you know what terrific speed is involved. Makes light look like a snail.

FERGUSON. (*Nodding his head*) I know. But how are we ever going to——? (*The BUZZER sounds once, then again, with a very insistent note. VERA, ALAN and BRAND, who have been conversing in whispers over by the window, now come toward the table.*)

VERA. Who can that be?

ALAN. I'll see.

BRAND. You seem to have done well by the cakes, MacRobert. (*Indicates the empty plate.*)

MACROBERT. They were remarkably good cakes. Where did you get them, Vera?

VERA. I made them. Now what do you think of that?

MACROBERT. Not really! I didn't know you could cook. Why have you been hiding your light under a bushel?

BRAND. At last, Vera, you've impressed MacRobert.

VERA. I might have known it would be as a cook that he'd finally come to admire me! Poor Mother! She died thinking I'd never be able to cook at all. (*ALAN has gone out R. and now returns, ushering in JUNE ADAMS.*)

ALAN. Look who's here, Father! It's June. I mean——

FERGUSON. (*Going to meet her*) Well, Miss Adams! I'm surprised to see you.

JUNE. (*Nervously*) Good afternoon, Mr. Ferguson. (*Nodding to VERA*) How do you do?

ALAN. (*Vivacious and highly pleased*) You know my sister, of course. And this is Doctor Brand. Miss June Adams. And Mr. MacRobert. (*BRAND bows and JUNE nods.*)

JUNE. I've met Mr. MacRobert before.

MACROBERT. In fact, not more than three hours ago.

FERGUSON. Is that so? Do you mean to say,

David, that you were in Jevic's laboratory this afternoon?

MACROBERT. I was not, sir. Miss Adams paid me the honor of a call. We had a very pleasant chat.

FERGUSON. (*Wonderingly*) Hm! Before or after the West African accident?

MACROBERT. Before. (*Turning to JUNE*) And how is Mr. Jevic? You've come straight from him, I suppose?

JUNE. I left Mr. Jevic's laboratory more than an hour ago. When I last saw him he was asleep.

FERGUSON. Asleep, was he? I can scarcely believe that. (*He looks sharply at JUNE*) Today of all days!

ALAN. I wish he'd stay asleep. Won't you sit down, Miss Adams? And take off your hat if you like. Please feel at home.

VERA. (*Cattily*) Alan, you're quite a hostess!

JUNE. Thank you. I'm—a little tired. (*She sits down at R. end of table, takes off her hat and smooths her hair. ALAN takes her hat to bench R.*) I've been walking.

FERGUSON. You didn't walk all the way here from the Consolidated Plant?

JUNE. Oh, no. I took a tube. But I've been walking in this neighborhood.

VERA. (*She is sarcastic*) Just for the exercise, I suppose.

JUNE. It's rather hard to explain. (*Seriously*) But you must believe what I have to say. (*The OTHERS take seats around or near the table.*) I know you mistrust me. And you have every right to, knowing as you do that I am, or was, Mr. Jevic's secretary.

ALAN. I don't mistrust you, Miss Adams.

JUNE. (*Smiling wanly at ALAN*) Thank you.

But the rest of you must believe in me, too. You must! (*She seems a bit hysterical.*)

BRAND. Miss Adams! We are all reasonable human beings.

FERGUSON. Go on, please.

JUNE. The reason I have walked for an hour in this neighborhood is that I could not get up courage to call here and do what I had made up my mind was my duty. I have been Mr. Jevic's secretary for about six months. During that time I have learned a great deal about his business. Some of it, of course, was beyond my understanding, but a great deal of it was clear. I developed a great admiration for him. He has such a marvellous mind. And he has always been as kind as possible to me. Even now I feel terribly guilty at the thought of betraying his confidence.

FERGUSON. Ah! So——

JUNE. But the last few days he has seemed different. He has been morose and—well——

BRAND. Unbalanced?

JUNE. Yes, unbalanced. I have been wondering what it would lead to. This afternoon it all became clear. He got to talking wildly and gave away his secret. He is planning to revenge himself on the world by destroying it.

MACROBERT. Revenge himself? Why?

JUNE. Because of insults suffered in his younger days, which have lain at the back of his mind all these years.

BRAND. (*Wisely*) Persecution complex.

JUNE. And, then, he feels that he has gone as far as his mind can take him, and he refuses to admit defeat. Rather than come to a standstill, he will end everything—himself and the world, together. One burst of glory——

FERGUSON. (*Jumping up and walking around excitedly*) I knew it! His mind has slipped over the

edge. He'll never get back to a sane view of life now. (*To JUNE, suddenly*) Did he say when he expects to——

JUNE. I'm sure he means to end everything tonight. He seemed quite desperate, and at the same time rather happy to have reached a decision. He wanted music, and something to drink and——

BRAND. And——what?

JUNE. For the first time since I have known him he acted rather——sentimental.

ALAN. Toward you?

JUNE. Well, in a way, though he was not offensive. It was chiefly as though he felt sorry for himself and wanted sympathy.

FERGUSON. (*Quietly*) Poor old Jevic. Imagine him asking for sympathy!

VERA. And what did you do, Miss Adams?

JUNE. I held his hand. He was like a little boy. Then he fell asleep, and I left the laboratory, for the last time.

MACROBERT. You realize, of course, Miss Adams, that we still have the right to assume that all this story is pure fabrication and that you are here spying for Jevic.

JUNE. (*With spirit*) But I am not! Can't you see that I am telling the truth? I was frightened. I don't want the world to come to an end tonight. And I knew that Mr. Ferguson at least was a man of ideals, and also that he was the one man most likely to save us from destruction. But if you still do not believe me, I have something here that will prove the goodness of my intentions. (*She draws from her waist the sheet of calculations*) This, I happen to know, is Mr. Jevic's secret formula for the destruction of the world. He admitted as much. When I left his laboratory I stole this sheet to bring here, thinking it might help you——

FERGUSON. By Heavens! This is—— (*He takes*

the paper from JUNE) Look at this, David! (MACROBERT and FERGUSON bend over the paper excitedly.)

MACROBERT. These are his disintegrating ray calculations, all right. I know this first step by heart. And the second. Now, let's see where he's going.

FERGUSON. Bring it along to my desk, David. I have some figures there that I want to compare with these. (*The Two MEN retreat to the alcove and settle down to work at desk.*)

ALAN. (*Proudly*) That was marvellous of you, Miss Adams, to risk stealing Jevic's papers. It took courage.

BRAND. Rather! Just think what he'll say when he finds them missing!

VERA. Not only what he'll say but what he'll do. I should think Miss Adams was in great danger.

JUNE. (*Smiling*) Perhaps I am. But aren't all of us in danger? Someone had to take a risk, and I was the only one who could.

ALAN. Isn't she wonderful?

VERA. You may have lost Jevic's admiration, but you have certainly gained Alan's. If that's worth much!

ALAN. Say, Vera. Leave me alone, will you?

BRAND. Miss Adams, I have been looking at that very interesting ring you wear on your second finger. I've never seen one just like it.

JUNE. There is only one other just like it.

BRAND. So? And who wears it?

JUNE. Mr. Jevic.

BRAND. And he gave this one to you?

JUNE. Yes.

BRAND. Why?

JUNE. There are certain occasions when he is away from his laboratory and wishes to see what is going on there. If I am there working, and am wearing this ring, he can establish contact.

BRAND. You mean to say that this ring is a complete telephotoscope?

JUNE. Complete except for the adjustor. I carry that in my purse.

ALAN. A telephotoscope. As small as that. Good Lord! It's a miracle. I've never seen one less than a foot square.

JUNE. It was made under Mr. Jevic's personal supervision in the Orient.

BRAND. May I look at it?

JUNE. Of course. (*He bends over her hand.*)

BRAND. With a perfect radianite center. It is marvelous. Such delicate workmanship.

VERA. Another reason for Mr. Jevic's hating you, Miss Adams. You've walked off with half of his valuable telephotoscope apparatus.

JUNE. I didn't think of that when I left. I didn't mean to carry it away with me. I shan't need it. (FERGUSON and MACROBERT return from the alcove.)

MACROBERT. (*Handing the paper back to JUNE*) You may have this back, Miss Adams. It's only good for starting a fire.

BRAND. What!

JUNE. Oh! What do you mean?

FERGUSON. MacRobert is right. These calculations are worthless. They start out quite sensibly, then they go off into a perfect jumble of nonsense. They're the work of a madman.

JUNE. And he was so careful of them! He made me lock them up where no one would see them. And he kept mumbling the word written across the top of the page.

MACROBERT. Ultima! Ha! A fine melodramatic word. You thought it meant the end of the world, but it only means the end of Jevic's sanity.

JUNE. Then won't he be able to do anything dangerous?

FERGUSON. Indeed, he will. He's got far enough for that in his calculations. He can start enough trouble to wipe out the universe. But he's given us no clues as to how to counteract his rays. That's what we were hoping for. We're right where we were.

BRAND. My personal opinion is that Jevic intended Miss Adams to steal this worthless set of figures.

ALAN. What!

BRAND. Why not? He's clever enough for that. He might easily suspect that she would become frightened and betray him. He would know also that she would run straight to this place with whatever valuable information she could lay hands on. Well, then—why not give her something worthless, in order to safeguard his valuable papers?

FERGUSON. Doctor Brand, I think you may be right. Tell me, Miss Adams, did Jevic take pains to explain that this paper was valuable?

JUNE. Yes, he did.

MACROBERT. And did he put it where he knew you could get at it?

JUNE. Yes.

BRAND. Then there's no doubt at all that he tricked you. In which case he is at this moment very happily working over the paper that you *didn't* steal. Suppose, Miss Adams, you try your pretty little ring, and see what you can see?

FERGUSON. Ring?

BRAND. Yes. Miss Adams has a most ingenious radianite ring—its companion being worn by Mr. Jevic. It is a telephotoscopic apparatus.

FERGUSON. May I see it?

JUNE. Of course.

BRAND. She can very easily put it into operation and allow us all to have a peek at Mr. Jevic.

MACROBERT. (*Whistles softly*) Well! (*Looks at the ring*) But, surely, you need an adjusting rod.

ALAN. She has that in her purse. Haven't you, Miss Adams?

JUNE. Yes. I'll make the connection, if you like.

FERGUSON. Thank you. (*JUNE opens her purse and produces a thin, jewelled rod about five inches long.*)

MACROBERT. What a gem! Set in real jewels, too! Must be worth a million!

FERGUSON. How big a projection field does it require, Miss Adams?

JUNE. About so big. (*She measures with her hands about a foot apart*) Any smooth surface will do.

MACROBERT. About eighteen inches square.

VERA. How about the television screen?

JUNE. That will do. Hold it there, please.

(*ALAN and VERA hold the screen in position. In the original production the screen was held up facing the audience and a small projection machine, concealed in the footlight trough, threw a motion picture of JEVIC going through the described action. If this method is found too elaborate, the screen may be held away from the audience and the whole thing faked.*)

JUNE. I can tilt the image as I like. (*She rises and stands by table, takes the ring off her finger, passes the rod through it, and moves the rod back and forth until the proper adjustment is obtained. The OTHERS crowd around her.*) If you're ready, I'll press the contact switch.

FERGUSON. All ready. (*There is a CLICK. A series of exclamations burst from the ONLOOKERS.*)

ALAN. It's coming on. Look!

MACROBERT. Sharpen the focus if you can, Miss Adams. There! That's better.

VERA. It's perfectly clear. The very room we were in! Why, there's Mr. Jevic at his desk!

JUNE. He's working!

FERGUSON. He's smiling!

ALAN. What's that he's wearing? It looks like a——

MACROBERT. If I could only see those figures on that sheet of paper before him, I'd—— By Jove! Hold the image, Miss Adams. I'll get a photograph of it. Quick, Vera, your kodak! I'll take a time exposure! (*VERA runs to alcove at Upper L.*)

ALAN. Look! Jevic's turning around. Something's startled him.

JUNE. He's heard the sound of the contact. He knows someone's watching him. He'll throw his switch, and we'll be cut off! (*VERA comes down with a kodak.*)

FERGUSON. Too late. It's gone. He jammed the current.

MACROBERT. Damnation! Damnation! It's clean gone. Never mind, Vera. Thanks just the same.

ALAN. Whew! That was exciting! It makes you feel like a magician.

MACROBERT. Ass that I am! Not to have thought of having a camera all ready set! I could have photographed that image, magnified the figures on the negative, and read old Jevic's pet formula. What an utter idiot I am!

JUNE. (*Putting the ring and the rod away*) There's no use trying it again. He'll keep his switch closed. He must have forgotten that I would be able to make contact.

BRAND. Now what's to do? Have we exhausted our scientific possibilities? (*SUSIE enters L.C., carrying a tabloid newspaper.*)

SUSIE. The *Evening Bulletin*, Mr. Ferguson. Just delivered.

FERGUSON. (*Takes the paper*) Thanks, Susie. (*SUSIE clears away dishes and exits L.C.*)

MACROBERT. What's the news, Mr. Ferguson? Is the end of the world predicted?

BRAND. Yes, I think Jevic ought to give everyone fair warning.

FERGUSON. (*Studying the paper*) Nice headline on your West African Power Plant experiment, David.

MACROBERT. Good Lord! Don't remind me of that!

FERGUSON. Threats of revolution in Russia.

BRAND. Again?

FERGUSON. Nothing much—wait a minute! What's this? (*Short pause*) Jevic—

VERA. What is it, Father? Tell us!

FERGUSON. (*Taking c. of stage*) Listen! A society note on the front page. (*Reads*) "Mr. Boris Jevic is entertaining this evening in his studio-laboratory at the Consolidated Power Company Building. Guests are limited to employees. Event is in celebration of a scientific discovery as yet unrevealed. There will be a demonstration of the discovery at midnight. This will be followed by dancing." (*FERGUSON stops and looks around at the others.*)

BRAND. In Heaven's name, what—?

JUNE. Entertaining! Why, it's a mistake. Mr. Jevic hadn't planned any— (*The truth dawns upon her*) Oh!

FERGUSON. That, my friends, is Mr. Jevic's way of announcing the end of the world.

ALAN. Well, I'll be—!

MACROBERT. Midnight, eh? To be followed by dancing.

BRAND. There is something sinister about that word *dancing*.

MACROBERT. Exactly. He means we'll all be dancing in space.

VERA. Oh, what shall we do?

MACROBERT. Do? We'll go to the party, of course.

FERGUSON. You're right, David. We must go to Jevic's party. It's our one chance.

ALAN. But how are we going to get in?

JUNE. I'll get you in!

BRAND. How? Surely Jevic will give orders not to admit you, now that he knows you have betrayed him.

JUNE. I know, but I'll get in some way. And the rest of you can follow me.

MACROBERT. (*Seizing her by the wrist*) See here, young lady. You're sure you're not planning to lead us into a trap?

JUNE. (*Earnestly*) I swear I'm not.

ALAN. I'll stake my life she's playing square with us, MacRobert.

MACROBERT. All right. I hope so. (*He releases JUNE.*)

BRAND. What time shall we go?

FERGUSON. Not too early. We must give Jevic time to perfect his plans. Then we'll nip them at the last moment. About half an hour before midnight, I should say.

VERA. But what if we shouldn't get in?

MACROBERT. Then we shall do a little dancing—among the stars. In which case, may I have the first dance with you, Miss Ferguson? (*He bows. The OTHERS look at him, registering various forms of astonishment and fear.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

JEVIC's laboratory again. It is 11:35 P. M. the same day. The room is softly lighted, but rather bright around JEVIC's desk. The windows at back show a blue sky, faintly tinged with green. The green spreads during the progress of the scene, until it obliterates the blue.

JEVIC is sitting at his desk, facing the audience. He is wearing his red shirt, which is open at the throat. He is reading from a book of poems.

JEVIC. (*Reading aloud*)

"I love to make the song of Luh Shan.

Luh Shan is my joy and inspiration.

I gaze idly into the Stone Mirror to cleanse my soul,

Though the path Prince Shieh went is lost under deep green moss.

I've swallowed early the sacred pellet and forsaken all worldly desires.

Playing on the harp thrice over, I've attained the way.

I see genii amid the iridescent clouds afar,
Going up to the celestial city with lotus in their hands.

I shall meet the Illimitable above the ninth heaven,
Then, with Lu-ao, I hope to journey to the Great Void."

(*Closing the book and leaning back*) "Journey to the Great Void."

(Signal LIGHT at L. flashes; door L. opens, and CHUNG enters noiselessly. He pauses halfway between the door and the desk.)

JEVIC. (Without turning around) Chung!

CHUNG. (Bowing low, then with head upright)
Sir?

JEVIC. Do you know the poems of Li Po?

CHUNG. Yes.

JEVIC. You like them?

CHUNG. Yes.

JEVIC. So do I. Because Li Po knew when to stop taking life seriously. He also had a very beautiful imagination. I too am a poet, though I do not write verses. My poetry is written in the divine language of symbols. Mathematical symbols, which are more full of meaning than words. I was just reading for pleasure one of Li Po's most charming poems. You may know it. It is called "The Song of Luh Shan." Do you know that one?

CHUNG. Yes.

JEVIC. I suppose you know it in Chinese. Well, in English it begins like this:

"—I am a mad man of Chu,

Singing the phoenix-bird song and laughing at the sage Confucius."

Of course Li Po wasn't mad at all, but there were those who thought he was. He liked to climb mountains. It brought him nearer to the stars. Then he had visions:

"I see genii amid the iridescent clouds afar,

Going up to the celestial city with lotus in their hands."

Beautiful, isn't it, Chung? I have climbed some mountains, myself. Not the kind that Li Po climbed. But we both like the stars, and we both have visions: "I shall meet the Illimitable above the ninth heaven,

Then, with Lu-ao, I hope to journey to the Great Void."

You see? Li Po and I are brothers in spirit. In spite of more than twelve hundred years. Chung, do you know how Li Po met his death?

CHUNG. Yes.

JEVIC. You do? Then tell me.

CHUNG. (*With graceful pantomime*) Li Po sail in boat along river in moonlight. Li Po drunk. He drink all time. He see picture of moon in water. He think moon very pretty flower. Like lotus flower. He lean out of boat to pick flower. He fall in water and drown.

JEVIC. That's right. That's the story. Too bad it isn't true. But we'll believe it because we like it. Eh, Chung? Li Po thought the moon's reflection in the river was a flower and tried to pluck it. Ha, ha, ha! I wouldn't make that mistake. I know more about the moon than Li Po did. And what's more, I can really pluck it! Ha, ha, ha! Chung, in honor of Li Po I want you to bring me a glass of liqueur Number twenty-seven. The old rascal would have approved of Number twenty-seven. Hurry!

CHUNG. One glass?

JEVIC. Just one. There's nobody fit to drink with me. And tell Doctor Werner I want to see him. (*CHUNG bows and exits L. Signal LIGHT off. Takes up the book and reads another poem*)

"Thrice my prince has called. I shall go, and not return.

Tomorrow morn I take leave of you,
And across the pass of Wu Kuan.

In vain you shall look for me in the white jade house,

But you must go and climb the Hill of Wang-fu longingly."

(*He closes the book slowly and lays it aside. Then*

he takes a large sheet of calculations and studies it. The L. signal LIGHT flashes on. Then the L. door opens, and old DOCTOR WERNER enters. He is nervous and haggard. He approaches the desk.)

WERNER. You sent for me, Mr. Jevic?

JEVIC. (*Without turning*) I did. I want the latest reports.

WERNER. (*In an excited, frightened voice*) The dials are all set as you ordered, sir. At least a thousand of the remoter spiral nebulae have gone out. The disintegrating wave is traveling at the anticipated speed and should reach the Andromeda nebula in fifteen minutes. After that—after that it will be——

JEVIC. (*Turning to him savagely*) After that it will be a matter of two or three minutes at most until it strikes the earth. Why don't you say it? What's the matter with you, Werner? A veteran scientist like you afraid to see an experiment through to the end? What do you care what happens to this silly little third-rate planet? You've lived your life.

WERNER. (*Cringing*) I know, sir. I shouldn't feel the way I do. But I—somehow, it does frighten me.

JEVIC. It will be a swift and painless death. Not really death at all. An instantaneous disintegration. Surely you'd prefer that to dying of indigestion.

WERNER. I know, sir. I'm not reasonable about it.

JEVIC. Well, you must be. Otherwise, I'll find it necessary to prescribe a particularly nasty and lingering death for you. Understand? Now get back to the ray chambers, and see that things are going as they should. If there's any trouble, call me.

WERNER. (*Submissively*) Yes, Mr. Jevic. (*Exit L. door, which closes after him. The signal LIGHT goes off.*)

JEVIC. (*Muttering*) Weakling! (*Bends to study the calculations again. A BUZZER sounds twice. JEVIC throws a switch. A VOICE sounds.*)

VOICE. Miss Adams to see Mr. Jevic. Instructions, please.

JEVIC. (*Ironically*) Miss Adams, eh? Send her in. (*Throws the switch. Leans back in his chair and strokes his chin thoughtfully.*)

(*Signal LIGHT R. flashes on. JEVIC takes a peculiar-shaped pistol from beneath the desk and turns facing the door, with the pistol leveled at it. The door R. opens. JUNE enters. She stops short as she sees the pistol pointed at her.*)

JEVIC. (*Smiling*) Ah, come in, my dear.

JUNE. Oh! Please, Mr. Jevic——!

JEVIC. Don't be frightened. Come nearer. I just want to make sure you haven't a weapon in your hand. (*JUNE is too frightened to move. The door closes behind her, and the signal LIGHT goes off.*)

JUNE. I—I came to explain.

JEVIC. Come nearer, I said. (*His tone is imperative. JUNE crosses halfway to the desk.*) That's better. You're unarmed, are you?

JUNE. Of course I am. Do you think——?

JEVIC. I think lots of things. And I remember a quaint old saying to the effect that the female of the species is more deadly than the male. (*He lays the pistol on the desk within easy reach*) This, as you very likely know, is a death-ray pistol. A civilized weapon, and very accurate. Now, you may sit down. (*He motions toward bench R. of desk.*)

JUNE. (*Sitting down, facing him*) I came to explain.

JEVIC. Very nice of you, my dear. You waited long enough.

JUNE. I was afraid to come. I couldn't make up my mind until just now.

JEVIC. Other women have had that difficulty.

JUNE. I stole a sheet of calculations from your desk this afternoon.

JEVIC. Of course you did.

JUNE. I am sorry.

JEVIC. Naturally you are. You stole the wrong sheet. An absolutely worthless one. I was careful to lead you into that error.

JUNE. Oh, how did you know I would do it?

JEVIC. I am seventy-nine years old. I know a good deal. I know, for instance, that you are a tender-hearted young woman with strong natural impulses. You want to live out your life with a young man like young Mr. Ferguson. I promised you a more ethereal future. You felt it your duty to yourself, to young Mr. Ferguson, and perhaps even to me, to counteract my plans. It was all natural, and from one point of view, admirable. But it didn't work. I am sorry to embarrass you by reminding you of your failure.

JUNE. Mr. Jevic, you must believe me. It isn't Alan Ferguson I love. It's you. That's why I *had* to come back. *(She drops her head coyly.)*

JEVIC. *(Pretending to be touched)* How very sweet of you! I appreciate it. But, really, my dear Miss Adams, I am not worthy of your love. *(His voice hardening)* You are a little late, Miss Adams. The world has less than a quarter of an hour's existence. But to show you how much I appreciate your affection, and to repay you for your tenderness this afternoon when you held my hand and listened to my life story, I grant you permission to stay here with me in this room until the end. Isn't that romantic enough? Two lovers facing eternity, side by side. It's a poem. *(He bursts into ironic laughter.)*

JUNE. (*Rises, horrified*) No! No! You mustn't! I tell you, you must live. We can be happy! I——

JEVIC. (*Still laughing*) It's no use, Miss Adams. I am not moved by pretty heroic speeches. Now tell me, where are Ferguson, MacRobert and the rest of the independent crowd? Didn't you bring them with you?

JUNE. (*Hesitating*) I——

JEVIC. Of course you did. You promised to get them in here, I suppose. You thought you could trick yourself into my confidence and then open the door for them. Well, I am not going to be tricked by you or anyone else. But, just to surprise you, I'll let the whole crowd of them in here. I want to watch the expressions on their faces when they see the end coming. I am prepared for any personal attack they might feel like making.

(*Signal LIGHT at L. flashes on. Door L. opens, and CHUNG enters with a tall glass of liqueur on a small tray. He brings it to the desk.*)

JEVIC. Ah, yes. Put it here beside me, Chung. It's Number twenty-seven, is it? (*He sniffs the liqueur.*)

CHUNG. Yes, sir. (*Bows.*)

JEVIC. Good. If I want more, I'll ring for you. (*To JUNE*) Would you like a glass with me, my dear?

JUNE. No.

JEVIC. I only asked out of politeness. You wouldn't appreciate the subtlety of Number twenty-seven, I fear. You didn't even like Number thirty-nine, which I so kindly offered you this afternoon. (*To CHUNG, who is about to exit through L. door*) Chung, as a special concession, and in recognition of our mutual respect for the poems of your coun-

tryman, Li Po, I permit you to drink a glass of Number twenty-seven, yourself.

CHUNG. (*Bowing*) Thank you. I shall do so. (*Exit CHUNG L. The door closes after him, and the signal LIGHT goes off.*)

JEVIC. Chung, unlike you, my dear, is a connoisseur of fine things. His ancestors were civilized when ours were living like wild boars in the forest. You, I dare say, have never even heard of Li Po. Have you?

JUNE. No. (*She is nervous and sullen.*)

JEVIC. You see! (*Shakes his head sadly. Throws a switch and talks into a receiving instrument*) Hello! Look outside the front door, and you will see a number of very silly scientists hanging about. Search them for weapons, and then send them all in here. (*Throws off switch*) Don't you think it's very kind of me to admit your friends to my farewell party? (*JUNE refuses to answer.*) You don't? Well, you're quite right. I am not doing it out of kindness. (*Picks up the drink and tries its bouquet again*) Marvelous Number twenty-seven! Was anything every so delicious? You know, the man who perfected this liqueur was a Russian, and he was shot for having contributed so much happiness to human beings. The Soviets declared that with such a drink as this in existence, men would cease to take politics and industry seriously. Besides, the Russians consider it immoral to be happy.

JUNE. (*Losing her temper*) Who are you to talk of happiness when you are on the verge of destroying everyone?

JEVIC. Ah, but I think every man is entitled to at least fifteen minutes of happiness at the end of his life. I was wrong this afternoon when I said I wished to be human for half an hour. That is too long. It would become boring. Anyway, I didn't spend the full half hour. As soon as you left with

the stolen paper, I got up and went to work. I wasn't asleep, you know.

JUNE. You are the worst man who has ever lived!

JEVIC. (*Amused*) Or the best. Other men have prolonged human life, with all its miseries. I end it. (*The signal LIGHT R. flashes on.*)

JUNE. They are coming!

JEVIC. And I am ready for them. (*Picks up the death ray pistol, and points it at the door. The door R. opens. Enter FERGUSON, MACROBERT, ALAN, WILLS, THOMPSON, BRAND and VERA. The MEN hesitate and put up their hands as they enter and see the pistol.*) Come in, gentlemen. Don't hesitate. Dear me, how many callers I am having this evening! You, too, Miss Ferguson? I am really honored. I presume you came in response to my invitation in the *Bulletin* this afternoon. Attracted by the dancing, perhaps. (*The R. door closes, and signal LIGHT goes off. JUNE is standing, looking hopefully at the newcomers. They glance at her, as if for a sign.*) Miss Adams came early. She is very fond of me. You may put your hands down, gentlemen. But be careful not to make any sudden movements in my direction. This is a death-ray pistol, you know. I suggest that you arrange yourselves somewhat symmetrically. Ferguson, you and your son and Doctor Brand will please stand there—(*Indicating bench at his R.*) —behind that bench. Miss Adams, will you resume your seat? (*JUNE does so. The THREE MEN line up behind her.*) Miss Ferguson, will you be seated over there, please? (*Indicates bench at his L.*) MacRobert and you other two men behind her. (*These orders are obeyed.*) Now, isn't that pretty? Like a nineteenth century photograph. Ladies and gentlemen, I drink your health. (*With one hand he keeps the pistol ready*

for action, with the other he lifts the glass to his lips and drinks.)

MACROBERT. (*Firmly*) Jevic. There's not time to bandy words. I demand the main sheet of your calculations.

JEVIC. (*Putting down his glass*) Demand? Ha, ha, ha! How droll you are, Mr. MacRobert. Didn't I send you a sheet of calculations this afternoon by Miss Adams?

MACROBERT. You did. But it was not the right one.

JEVIC. Too bad. A very serious error, for which I apologize. Perhaps this is the one you would like. (*He holds up a large sheet of heavy paper tantalizingly*) But you're not going to have it, MacRobert. Nor is anyone else.

FERGUSON. Jevic, do you know what is happening?

JEVIC. Better than you do, I suspect. I know that in approximately seven minutes the wave of destruction which my rays set in motion will reach the Andromeda nebula, and three minutes after that it will reach the earth. From that point on I have not calculated its course, as it seemed to me unnecessary.

BRAND. Ten minutes to live!

MACROBERT. Jevic, you're insane. Give me that sheet of calculations, and let us see if something can't be done.

JEVIC. Why don't you come and get it if you want it? Here it is.

MACROBERT. I'm not such a fool as that. In your present frame of mind you'd like nothing better than an excuse to plug me with a death-ray. Be reasonable, man, and give us a fighting chance. Our brains against yours, and less than ten minutes in which to win or lose. Haven't you an ounce of sporting blood in your veins?

JEVIC. (*Shaking his head*) None whatever. I am not interested in sport. I leave that to you Britishers, with your golf and cricket. No, you're not going to rob me of my victory now.

VERA. A poor sort of victory it is, Mr. Jevic. No single human being will ever hear one syllable of your conquering greatness. Not even you will realize for the briefest fraction of a second the terrible magnitude of the thing you have done. A miserable, pathetic creature—that's what you are. You and your silly red shirt!

JEVIC. (*Smiling tolerantly*) Let's not lose our tempers. We must be ladies and gentlemen to the last.

MACROBERT. (*Pointing to the window at back*) My God, look there! (*ALL but JEVIC follow his suggestion. There is a flaring of GREEN FIRE outside.*)

ALAN. It's coming!

JEVIC. Yes, it's coming, which reminds me that I must not leave any of this undrunk. (*He empties his glass*) I wonder what the rest of the world is thinking by this time. MacRobert, suppose you turn on the radio. The dials are behind you in the wall. Try Paris first. Let's see if Paris is still gay. (*MACROBERT does as he is told.*)

FERGUSON. It's not likely you'll get anything through now. The air's jammed.

JEVIC. I hope we can still get Paris. How nice it would be to hear the strains of an accordion playing a tango in Montparnasse.

MACROBERT. Nothing comes through.

JEVIC. What a pity. Then try London.

MACROBERT. Nothing from there either.

BRAND. An hour ago there was a report that Paris had gone under in anarchy. Madness was fast spreading to all classes of the people.

FERGUSON. I suggest, David, you try the Astro-

nomical Bureau at Washington. Though I can see no real point in seeking information.

MACROBERT. I'll try them.

JEVIC. Better hurry. You've not more than five minutes left.

JUNE. Oh! (*She bursts into sobs*) I can't stand it!

ALAN. (*Putting his arm about her shoulder*) There! There! Don't be frightened. Something may happen yet to save us.

JEVIC. (*Grimly*) Nothing can save us! Fortunately.

MACROBERT. Here it is. I've got Washington. (*Turns amplifier.*)

VOICE. (*Coming loud and fast over the radio*) —Reports confirm those of the last three hours. The spiral nebulae are being annihilated en masse. Estimates from forty-four stellar observatories, based on ray counts, show that within the past four hours half a million of the remoter spirals have been swept from existence. The Bureau can no longer hold out hope for the safety of the earth. We are face to face with a new form of energy, manifesting itself in complete destruction of matter. The wave is spreading in this direction. We may expect it to strike our galaxy not later than midnight. Our annihilation will be instantaneous and therefore—— (*VOICE is cut off suddenly.*)

MACROBERT. (*Working the dials*) It's gone dead.

JEVIC. Good! We've heard enough. Get back where you belong, MacRobert. (*MACROBERT returns to his place beside the bench. VERA turns and gives him her hand, which he takes and holds.*)

WILLS. Listen, men. We've got one chance in a million of saving our necks. Why not all make a dash for Jevic? I'm willing to make the first move.

THOMPSON. That's the right idea. It's our only

chance. I'm with you, Wills. We'll count three, and then rush him.

ALAN. I'm ready!

JEVIC. (*Rising heavily to his feet*) What's the meaning of this argument, gentlemen? Disputation is not for the sons of heaven. (*He sways slightly and looks first to R., then to L.*) For be it known that I am a mad man of Chu, singing the phoenix-bird song and laughing at the sage Confucius. (*He pauses and gazes stupidly into their faces.*)

FERGUSON. (*In a hoarse whisper*) His mind has broken.

JEVIC. (*Climbing onto his chair and standing upright*) Li Po is a great mountain climber. He loves to make the song of Luh Shan.

"I see Genii amid the iridescent clouds afar,
Going up to the celestial city with lotus in their hands."

WILLS. (*Whispering*) Shall we rush him?

MACROBERT. Wait! We have three minutes left.

JEVIC. (*His voice growing softer and more plaintive*) But the Lotus flower is blooming in the water. It is like the moon. (*Looks down at the top of his desk as though it were a pool*) And Li Po plucked the lotus moon from the water—There it is! (*He leans forward, sways, and plunges headlong onto the desk, rolling over to the floor with a thud and lying inert. The WOMEN scream. The MEN are for a moment too astonished to move. MACROBERT breaks the spell. He rushes to the desk and seizes the sheet of calculations. From this point the scene is played at great speed, speeches overlapping.*)

BRAND. My God! He's fainted.

VERA. Look out! It may be a trick!

MACROBERT. I'll see what I can make out of this. Miss Adams, you must show us where the ray-chambers are.

JUNE. The ray-chambers are through the sliding-

door. I think I can find the combination. (*Hurries to desk and touches buttons.*)

BRAND. (*Examining JEVIC*) Stone dead. Not at all sure of the cause. Heart failure, I should think.

ALAN. Funny, that stuff he got off before he tumbled. Sounded like a hop-head's dream.

JUNE. I have it!

(*The following scene may be worked in either of two ways. The simpler way is to have the sliding door L. swing open at this point, giving access to the ray chambers, which are not seen by the audience. In this case WILLS and THOMPSON receive directions and send replies by means of telephone, their replies being heard by the audience by means of loud-speaker apparatus. The more elaborate, but certainly more effective method, which was employed in the original production, is to have a large panel in the back wall, c., covered by an Oriental tapestry, slide upward, revealing the secret ray-chamber. This chamber need not be more than three or four feet deep, but it must be fitted with impressive electrical apparatus. In the original production a Tesla coil was mounted on a table, and by means of a transformer, 15,000 volts were used to produce a spectacular spark. A fake ray-tube was set near this, pointing at an angle toward the sky. This tube was constructed out of three 10-gallon gasoline containers—such as are used at filling-stations—set end to end and held in place by a wooden framework. The glass was painted with a mixture of Fluoroscene and gelatine, to give it luminosity, and under the tube was placed a rotating mirror—the sort used in every physics laboratory—which was attached to a motor. On this mirror was focused a GREEN BABY*

SPOT, from backstage. The effect was a gorgeous, pulsating green fire in the ray-tube. These electrical effects should be timed to reach a noisy climax when indicated by the dialogue. In case the ray-chamber is shown in this manner, WILLS and THOMPSON shout back and forth to MACROBERT, at the desk, without use of telephone.)

MACROBERT. Quick, Wills! You, too, Thompson. Into the ray-chamber! I'll give you the combinations. Take this with you. (*Hands WILLS the death-ray pistol*) Now run! It's life or death!

FERGUSON. (*At the desk beside MACROBERT*) Here are the figures we want. Neutralizing rays. You take wave-lengths, and I'll take ray-intensities.

MACROBERT. Right!

VERA. I wish to Heaven I could do something to help. Don't you suppose there's anything——

BRAND. I doubt it. Just keep calm. We'll watch the sky. (*He and VERA cross to window.*)

WILLS. All ready. Let's go!

MACROBERT. O.K., Wills. Insert keys at wave-lengths Lambda 484748 and 596368 and Omicron 8685.

WILLS. Check. (*CRACKLE of electric spark.*)

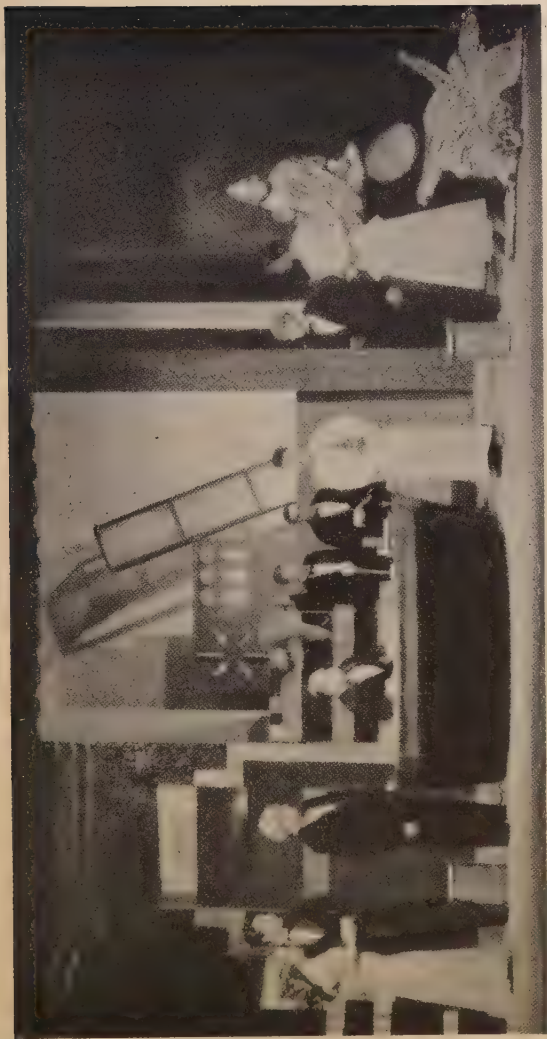
MACROBERT. Set ray-intensities A86, B90, G112, Z14.

WILLS. Check. (*CRACKLE of electric spark.*)

BRAND. (*From window*) Look out! Look out! It's coming!

(*CRASH and LIGHTS dim. Through the window the sky shows GREEN and CRIMSON-STREAKED.*)

MACROBERT. (*Desperately*) Just one more com-



ACT III. SETTING BY CLAREMONT (CALIF.) COMMUNITY PLAYERS.

See Page 97

bination, Wills. Set wave-length Mu 80, ray-intensity L 484947.

WILLS. Check. (*CRACKLE of electric spark.*)

MACROBERT. Now get out of the ray-chamber as quick as you can. There's liable to be a backfire. (*SHRIEKS. Terrific CRASH. LIGHTS out.*)

FERGUSON. (*In the darkness, quietly*) David, I believe we've won.

ALAN. Look! There's someone coming with a light!

JUNE. It's Chung. Mr. Jevic's servant.

CHUNG. (*Entering from L. with electric torch, which lights his face*) I look for my master.

BRAND. Your master is dead.

CHUNG. I know my master dead. I kill him. (*General exclamation of astonishment.*)

CHUNG. He say he pick moon out of sky. (*The green and crimson are now seen through the window to have faded from the sky, and the normal BLUE of a moonlit night takes their place.*)

CHUNG. Not good to pick moon out of sky. He ask Chung bring him nice drink. Chung put something in drink kill him pretty quick. Moon he stay in sky like lotus flower. My master happy now.

FERGUSON. The final irony.

BRAND. Yes, Jevic's red shirt brought him bad luck.

FERGUSON. He was a great man. The world will never see another like him.

BRAND. Perhaps it's just as well.

(*A distant CLOCK starts striking twelve.*)

CURTAIN

"GREEN FIRE"

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I

Electrical instruments (desk).
Astronomical instruments (desk).
Electrical equipment.
Books (on shelves).
Magazines (table R.C.).
Telephone (table R.C.).
Writing material (desk).
Tray off L.C.:
 Coffee.
 Tea.
 Milk.
 Bullion.
 Sandwiches.
 Cake.
 6 cups, saucers, spoons.
Coffee cups (table L.).
Tray (Susie).
Cloth (Susie).
Card (Susie).
Object, like a watch (Brand).

ACT II

SCENE I

Radiophone instruments (desk).
Electrical apparatus (desk).

Papers (desk).
Books (desk).
Writing material (desk).
Typewriter (desk R.).
Papers (desk R.).
Map of the world.
2 Chinese dragons.
Jade Confucius (dais L.).
Red flannel shirt (desk drawer).
Tray (Chung).
2 goblets (on tray).
Yellow paper (in desk).

SCENE II

Tea service (table L.).
Cups, saucers, spoons (table L.).
Toast and cakes (table L.).
Yellow paper (June).
Purse (June).
Jewelled rod (in purse).
Ring (June).
Small projection machine.
Kodak.
Tabloid paper (Susie).

ACT III

Book (Jevic).
Calculation sheet (desk).
Pistol (desk).
Liqueur glass on tray (Chung).

NOTES ON COSTUMING

A good deal of imagination and freedom may be employed in choosing or designing the costumes for this play. Inasmuch as the action supposedly occurs a number of years in the future, no one style can be prescribed. But it is obvious that Ferguson, Thompson, Wills and Werner should all wear clothes suitable for laboratory workers. White or grey costumes, severe in cut, are desirable. A metallic texture is appropriate. Alan Ferguson and David MacRobert should wear athletic garb—shorts and bare legs, possibly. Doctor Brand's clothes should be much like those of the laboratory workers in design, but of a contrasting color. Jevic must dress in an eccentric fashion, with something of the Oriental and something of the modernistic—not pure Oriental. His clothes must express vanity and power. June and Vera should dress simply, and with novelty, to suggest the future. In the original production they wore smart pajama outfits. In a subsequent production they wore men's shorts with blouses. But Vera should appear the more athletic of the two, and June the more feminine. Susie can wear anything unobtrusive and consistent with the other women's costumes. Chung can wear conventional Chinese clothes. The main thing is to achieve the effect of ultra-modern style and atmosphere, and to employ costumes that harmonize with rooms of glass, metal and concrete.

PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PAPERS

The press can be an immense help in giving publicity to your productions. In the belief that the best reviews from the papers are always interesting to local audiences, and in order to assist you, we are printing below several excerpts from those reviews.

To these we have also added a number of suggested press notes which may be used either as they stand or changed to suit your own ideas and submitted to the local press.

"All sorts of oddities and inventions trick and tickle the receptive fancy of any properly trained 'mystery' audience."—*Pasadena, Calif., "Star-News."*

"'Green Fire' dazzles throng at Playhouse. Here is a masterpiece of stagecraft. Here is an absorbing novel, brilliantly dramatized."—*Pasadena, Calif., "Post."*

"The play, dramatized by Glenn Hughes, moves with dramatic certainty."—*Los Angeles, "Times."*

"'Green Fire' has more than the intrinsic interest of a strikingly original, 'different' and spine-tingling play."—*Los Angeles, "Evening Express."*

"—the play moves surely toward a thrilling finish—on the whole the piece is worthy of the attention of the Theatre Guild."—"Billboard."

"Playgoers the world over, providing their mood matched that of last night's audience—should find more than a few thrills in watching this scientific

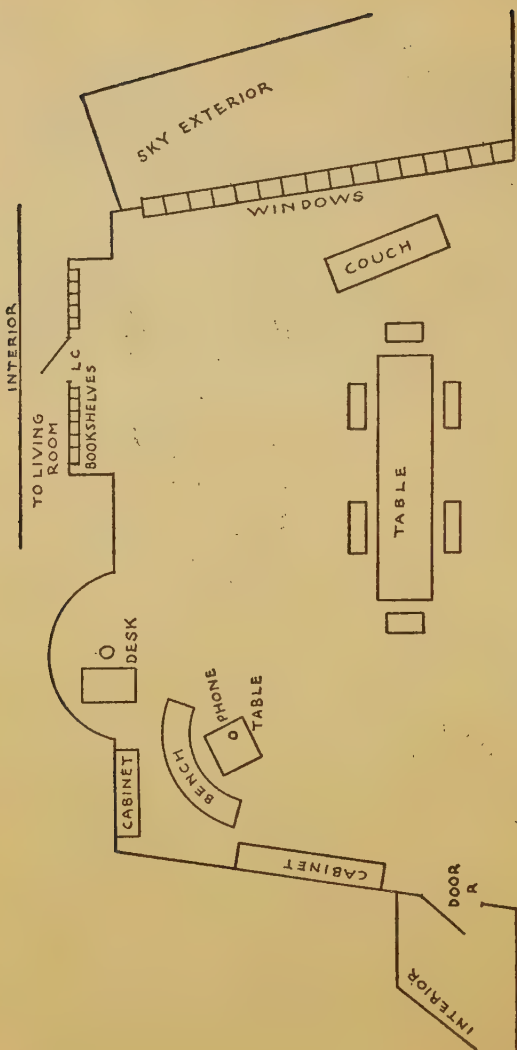
mystery of the year 1990."—*Seattle, Wash., "Times."*

"It is spectacular in the sense that it evokes an innate response to the mysterious pulse-beat of cosmos."—*Seattle, Wash., "Post-Intelligencer."*

SYNOPSIS

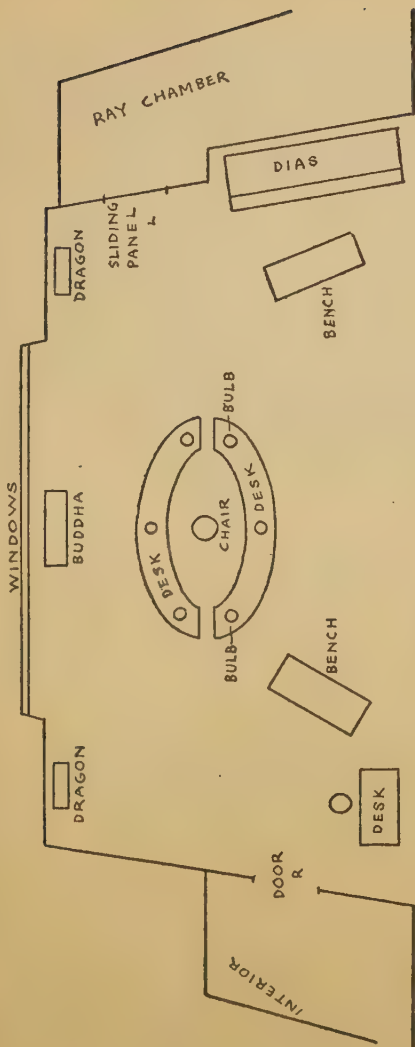
The action of the play is supposed to occur in the year 1990. James Ferguson, an elderly, idealistic scientist, is discovered unconscious in his laboratory. His son, Alan, goes for the doctor, while his daughter, Vera, and two laboratory assistants revive him. The doctor arrives and discovers that Ferguson has suffered a shock of a mysterious nature. At the same time it is observed that the sky has turned green. Ferguson intimates that the celestial disturbance has been caused by disintegrating rays set loose by Boris Jevic, Ferguson's rival in the search for the secret to the control of atomic energy. Both men are close to the secret, and whichever wins will control the destiny of the universe. David MacRobert, a young Scotchman, in love with Vera, could help solve the problem, but he is too independent to ally himself with either camp. Jevic calls on Ferguson and warns him that unless he stops fighting him he (Jevic) will wipe him out. Ferguson refuses the terms offered. Jevic returns to his own laboratory and works feverishly on his formula. He is a misanthrope by nature, as well as an egomaniac, and in his bitterness toward humanity he plans to blow up the universe. He sets the time at midnight. June Adams, his secretary, to whom life is still interesting, escapes to Ferguson's laboratory and gives warning of Jevic's plans. MacRobert is finally convinced that if the world is to be saved from destruction he must throw his intelligence into the scientific battle to thwart Jevic's mad scheme. The Ferguson crowd get into

Jevic's laboratory just before midnight, but Jevic holds them at bay with a death-ray pistol while the rays that he has set to work among the nebulae are spreading chaos nearer and nearer the earth. Jevic drinks a liqueur and then delivers a poetic rhapsody on his diabolical scheme. He is seized with a paroxysm and falls over dead. Ferguson and Mac-Robert dash for the ray chambers and succeed in neutralizing the destructive waves just in the nick of time. Jevic's Chinese servant, Chung, then enters and reveals that he has poisoned his master's drink because it is not right that man should "pluck the moon from the sky."



SCENE DESIGN ACT I- ACT 2 SCENE 2
"GREEN FIRE"

SKY EXTERIOR



SCENE DESIGN ACT 2 SCENE 1 - ACT 3
"GREEN FIRE"

REBOUND

Comedy in 3 acts. By Donald Ogden Stewart. Produced originally by Arthur Hopkins at the Plymouth Theatre, New York. 7 males, 5 females. Modern costumes.

Sara Jaffrey is twenty-eight, pretty, charming but unmarried—when we first meet her in the home of her sister, Mrs. Crawford. Bill Truesdale is much in love with Evie Lawrence, but she throws him over for the rich Lyman Patterson. Sara and Bill immediately become engaged and are married shortly after.

We next find them on their honeymoon in Paris, where Bill is beginning to show early symptoms of being a neglectful husband—even failing to show up to meet Sara's father. It appears that Evie and Lyman have turned up in Paris on their wedding tour and Bill has been spending the truant time with his old love. This devotion to Evie grows into alarming proportions despite Sara's pleading with Bill until she realizes love is not a thing to be begged for but a thing to command. She switches her methods and Bill rebounds back to her arms with every indication of being a devoted husband.

"The best light comedy written by anybody hereabouts in ten or twenty years." Heywood Broun, N. Y. Telegram.

(Royalty, fifty dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

THE ROYAL FAMILY

Comedy in 3 acts. By George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber. Produced originally by Jed Harris at the Selwyn Theatre, New York. 11 males, 6 females. 1 interior. Modern costumes.

A tremendously interesting and fascinating story of a great family of the American stage. The Cavendishes, with which "The Royal Family" concerns itself, comprises three generations. First, there is Fanny Cavendish, wife of the deceased Aubrey Cavendish, "the first actor of his day," who at seventy is planning her tour for the coming season. There is her brother, Herbert Dean, a pompous player now in his decline; Julie, her daughter, is at the crest of her career as a Broadway star, Tony, her son, having forsaken the stage for Hollywood, rushes home only to flee to Europe to escape the attention of a Polish picture actress. Soon he is back again in New York seeking refuge from a lovesick Balkan princess. A granddaughter, Gwen, just building into important ingenue roles, jolts the family by marrying a non-professional and forsaking the stage, but only temporarily. Through it all, Fanny Cavendish rules the household with her courage and a sharp tongue. Though her children are idols to the public, they are defenseless under the withering fire of the old lady's sarcasm.

(Royalty on application.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

HOTEL UNIVERSE

Play without intermission by Philip Barry. Produced originally by the Theatre Guild at the Martin Beck Theatre, New York. 5 males, 4 females. 1 exterior scene. Modern costumes.

One of the most striking and original plays ever written by an American, and on the occasion of its production in New York it aroused heated controversy. It is the most ambitious and brilliant play Mr. Barry has ever attempted, and is concerned with the baffling problems which every adult human being is at some time forced to face. The characters seem hardly to exist at all in relation to other people, which is surely the reason why Mr. Barry discovered (somewhat as Chekov discovered) that to invent a plot for them would be to deprive them of the kind of reality he was after. These people are essentially introspective, centripetal, literally self-seeking. And what are they after? Just an answer to the question that every thinking human being must ask himself—and vainly: What is life? What is death? Where are we going, and why? What is the meaning of past, present and future? Published only in bound form.

"A glittering play of unreality and magic to quicken the pulses and stir the minds . . ." Richard Lockridge, N. Y. Sun.

(Royalty on application.) PRICE \$2.00 per copy (*in cloth*).

THE FARMER'S WIFE

Comedy in 3 acts. By Eden Phillpotts. Produced originally by Charles Coburn in New York City. 9 males, 13 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes.

This delightful comedy of English people was one of the long run successes in London before coming to New York. The story is concerned with Samuel Sweetland, a Devonshire farmer and a widower, who decides to marry again. Aided and abetted by his housekeeper, Araminta, he makes out a list of the various eligible women in the county and proposes to them in turn. But they all refuse him, and in the end he finds at home, in Araminta, the one woman.

(Royalty on application.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

BERKELEY SQUARE

Play in 3 acts. By John L. Balderston. Produced originally by Gilbert Miller and Leslie Howard at the Lyceum Theatre, New York. 7 males, 8 females. 1 interior. Modern and Eighteenth century costumes. Plays a full evening.

Peter Standish, a young American architect, has inherited, so it seems, an old English house in which one of his ancestors had played an important role. Taking up his residence there, he discovers that he can walk back and forth through time, that he can step into the shoes of his ancestor and live the life that man lived in the Eighteenth century. He accepts the challenge of the adventure and finds himself entering the old drawing-room dressed in the costume of the time but still essentially himself, and he plays the game as well as he can. Much charms, but much also shocks him. His knowledge of the future sometimes trips him up, but the platitudes of the Nineteenth and the Twentieth centuries are brilliant epigrams to those about him. But despite his success he is not really at home.

"Berkeley Square" is the finest play of the season—a play that casts a spell." J. Brooks Atkinson, New York Times.

"Unusual in flavor and right in entertainment—deserves the attention of every playgoer who wants to buy an evening of complete beguilement." John Anderson, N. Y. Evening Journal.

(Royalty will be quoted on application for cities and towns where it may be presented by amateurs.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

HOLIDAY

Comedy in 3 acts. By Philip Barry. Produced originally by Arthur Hopkins at the Plymouth Theatre, New York. 7 males, 5 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes. Plays a full evening.

Holiday, with Hope Williams, was one of the outstanding successes of the New York theatre, and later done in motion pictures with Ann Harding. It is the story of a young man who is engaged to a girl of great wealth and social standing. But he refuses to "make good" with her father, preferring to enjoy life as a holiday and an independent venture in happiness. Because of this the two separate, but at the end the girl's sister realizing that the young man is right and her family wrong, confesses that she is in love with him and agrees to go away and marry him. A delightful and brilliant comedy.

"One could ask for nothing better (except that it is dangerous to laugh so hard) than a stageful of Philip Barry characters indulging in his special brand of happy-go-lucky nonsense."

Robert Littell, N. Y. Post.

"It is continuously gay and amusing, blissfully mad, and stunningly sane, all at the same time. . . ." John Anderson, N. Y. Journal.

(Royalty, fifty dollars.) PRICE \$2.00 per copy (in cloth).



